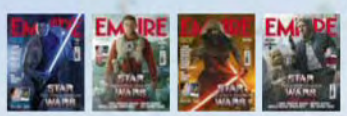
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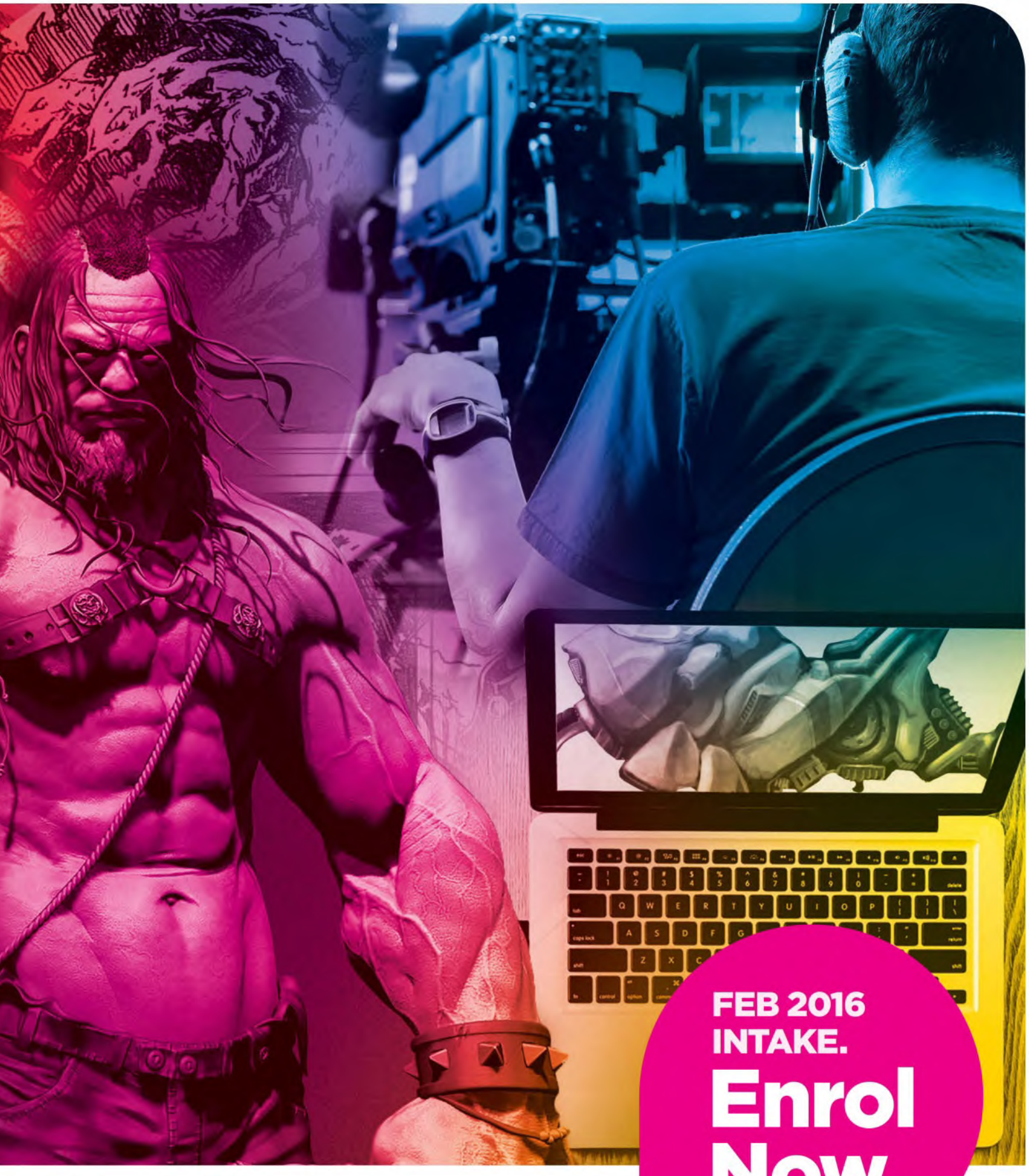


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...for access to trailers for all the films in In Cinemas, a selection of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* trailers, an interview with *The Gift*'s Joel Edgerton and much more. All in a one-scan package.

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ONE OF THE FEW REDEEMING FACTORS ABOUT BEING A portly 45-year-old is that you can tell anyone under the age of 40 that: a) You saw *Star Wars* in its first theatrical run, b) You weren't wearing nappies. Therefore, you can remember it. And… c) No matter how transformative the experience was for them when they saw it on VHS, DVD or Bit-friggin'-Torrent, they, through the miscalculation of being born too late, CAN NEVER HAVE THAT EXPERIENCE.

Using the nominative "Kid" is also a bonus, as in, "Don't get me started on *Star Wars*, kid, I saw it at the Roselands Cinema in November '77. When Obi-Wan lightsaberised Ponda Baba's arm off in the cantina, mum dragged me and my two little brothers (one, like you, was in nappies) out into the sun-dappled lobby, where I spent three manic minutes convincing her to let us watch the end of the movie. She relented, but it was a close call. You shoulda been there. Junior."

And so forth. Of course, it's utterly irrelevant. Why is it irrelevant? Because *Star Wars* belongs to us all. Generation after generation feels the power of The Force, filling the internet with fan fiction, films and Wookieepedia entries, packing convention halls with Stormtroopers, Darths, Jawas and — as we saw at Oz Comic-Con in Sydney — a life-size robotic R2-D2 (g'day, Fergus!), and filling the atmosphere with chants of "Pcheeew! Pcheeeew!", "Zshrrrroooooommmm-zshrooom!" and "No, *I'M* Luke!"

Which brings us to here, on the eve of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*' release, with our hands clasped in new hope and our hearts in our throats, because we want it to be… transcendent. Tough ask. Thanks to a masterful trailer run, people's expectations have gone beyond, "Please J.J. — don't let it be shit," to "Sweet Jeffrey Jacob! Have you created a cinema experience that will transport our souls to '77 and recapture the frickin' magic?! (And, sub-question, did you have *actual access* to The Force?)"

Empire's 47-page coverage — which begins with our first ever five-cover collector's set — is so rich and creamy you could eat it in a cone. We talk to just about everyone, look at lightsaber hilts through history (page 74), maps of the galaxy far, far away (pages 63 and 88) and even had Simon Pegg explain his is own brand of fandom. Four days older than me, he too was there in '77 (although not at Roselands; read it on page 96).

At time of publishing we'd yet to see *Episode VII*, but we are, like you, quivering with anticipation. And 40 years from now, I — likely on my first rejuvenation and living in a spa retreat on Titan — will have my smug douchebag act down pat, telling kids at the holociné counter how I was there in 1977, and again in 2015. This is, of course, AN EXPERIENCE THEY CAN NEVER HAVE.

Feel free to create your own version of the above.

No, thank you.



EDITOR
DANIEL MURPHY

MEGA-POSTER ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Turn to page 98.
2. Carefully extract your poster along the perforated strip.
3. Store thoughtfully.
4. Buy the next three copies of *Empire* (that's Feb-Apr) to get your remaining quarters.
5. Assemble using adhesive of your choice in location of choice.
6. Enjoy.



EMPIRE

(… and what *Star Wars* spin-off movie we'd make)

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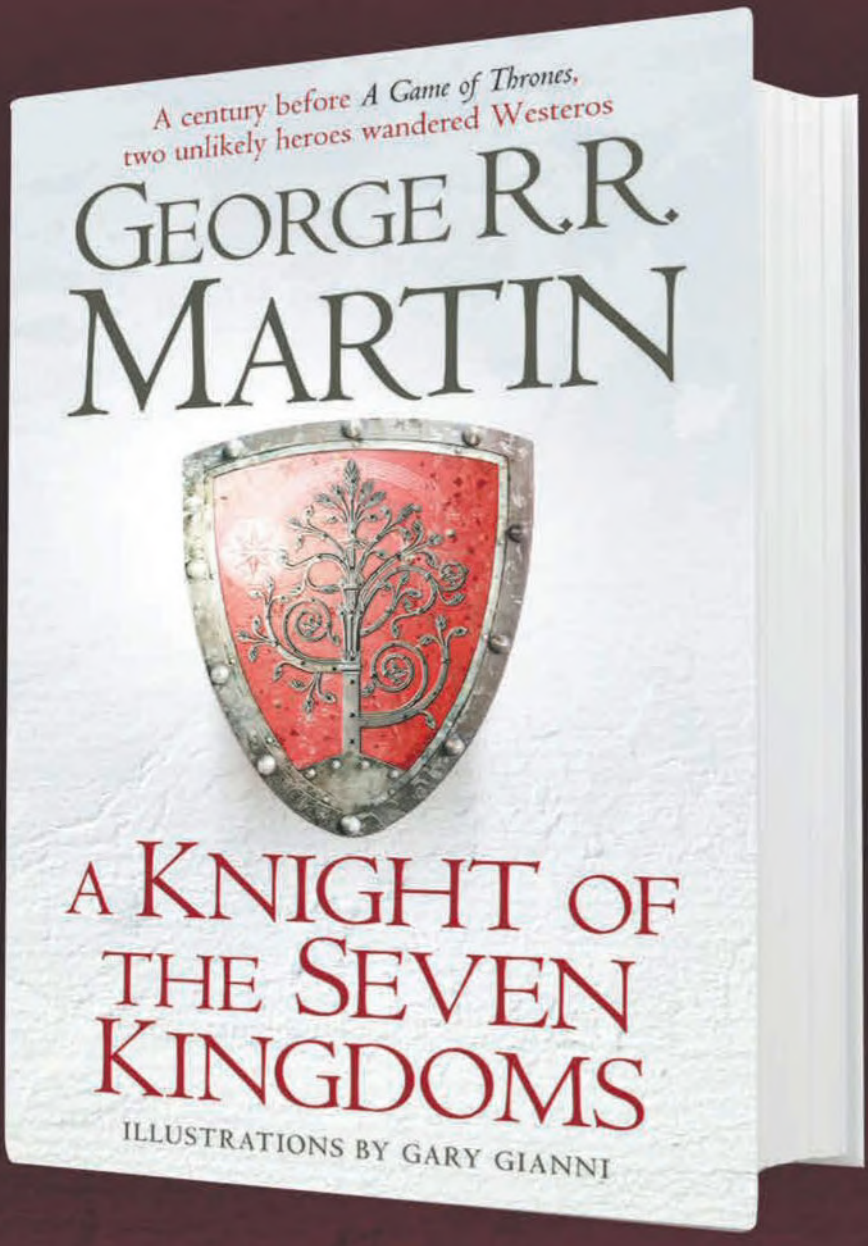
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LETTER of the MONTH



WHERE WE'RE GOING, WE DON'T NEED ROADS...

Great Scott! If my calculations are correct, this year brought *Back To The Future* Day, October 21, 2015. To celebrate this epic event I managed to build Marty McFly's hoverboard with my dad. We built it from scratch and I'm still working on the hover capabilities! I even had a movie marathon watching *Back To The Future I*, *II* and *III*. This year was great for me as I met three of *Empire*'s talented crew at Oz Comic-Con Sydney. *Empire* is my favourite magazine of all time and I read every issue cover to cover and even go back for seconds. Thanks for another great year *Empire* and I can't wait to see what 2016 holds.

OLIVER TUCKER, VIA EMAIL

Thank YOU, Oliver – we're digging that hoverboard! See you for more movie mayhem in 2016, young padawan...



EVERY letter printed this month scores a Blu-ray of Guy Ritchie's 1960s spy flick *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, starring Henry Cavill.

BOND LOVE! ALSO, HATE

Given how much effort *Empire* have put into their latest issue (#177), I can only contemplate aiming criticism by means of a compliment sandwich. Firstly, congratulations are in order for another impressive Bond issue with the thorough coverage we've come to expect and love. The highlight here was an interview with Christoph Waltz, one of the greatest actors working today. Then there's the issue of the posters. Two of the worst Bond films are not the sort I'd want to commemorate, let alone revere by placing upon my wall. Also, I'm sure many readers will agree that a certain *Star Wars* poster is definitely overdue. However, no amount of poster disapproval could possibly dampen the sheer joy of reading Sam Mendes's interviews with some of the greatest filmmakers of our time – they were insightful and simply delightful. A true cinephile's dream come true!

DYLAN R., VIA EMAIL

Ah... thanks? Also, we have a feeling you'll be happy with this month's (part 1 of 4) mega-poster...

ULTIMATE ISSUE: DELIVERED

If I wanted to design my own issue of *Empire*, I'd put in: An article about the greatest director – Spielberg. Articles involving TWO of the classiest actors – De Niro and Hanks. An article about one of the sexiest actresses – Hathaway. LOTS of my favourite genre – superheroes. And a poster with James Bond. After reading your articles from #177, I know I love the mag – I put a subscription renewal slip on my wife's pillow to give her the hint. But issue 176 was the issue of the year for me. Let me know when you want me to tell you what I want in my next 'OMG' issue!

BRETT COBB-CLARK, VIA EMAIL

Our people will be in touch with your people shortly...

CROSSWORD COCK-UP

What's up with the crosswords lately? I got my December issue and turned to the crossword page only to have a huge case of the deja vu! December's was the same as October's. And upon looking at my old issues, November's was the same as September's! Are you guy's a little bit over-worked and under-paid like me? Do you want me to knock a few new crosswords up for you for future issues? No problem, just say the word.

TRENT EDWARDS, WOY WOY NSW

Over-worked and under-paid we may be, but that's no excuse – apologies, dear readers. You'll find a brand new, unrecycled crossword on page 112, plus the answers beneath for the October crossword (which we didn't print). Also, issue 177 erroneously says 'September answers' when it should've said 'November answers'. Yes, we're idiots. Trent – you are hereby promoted to Crossword Legend. Congrats.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

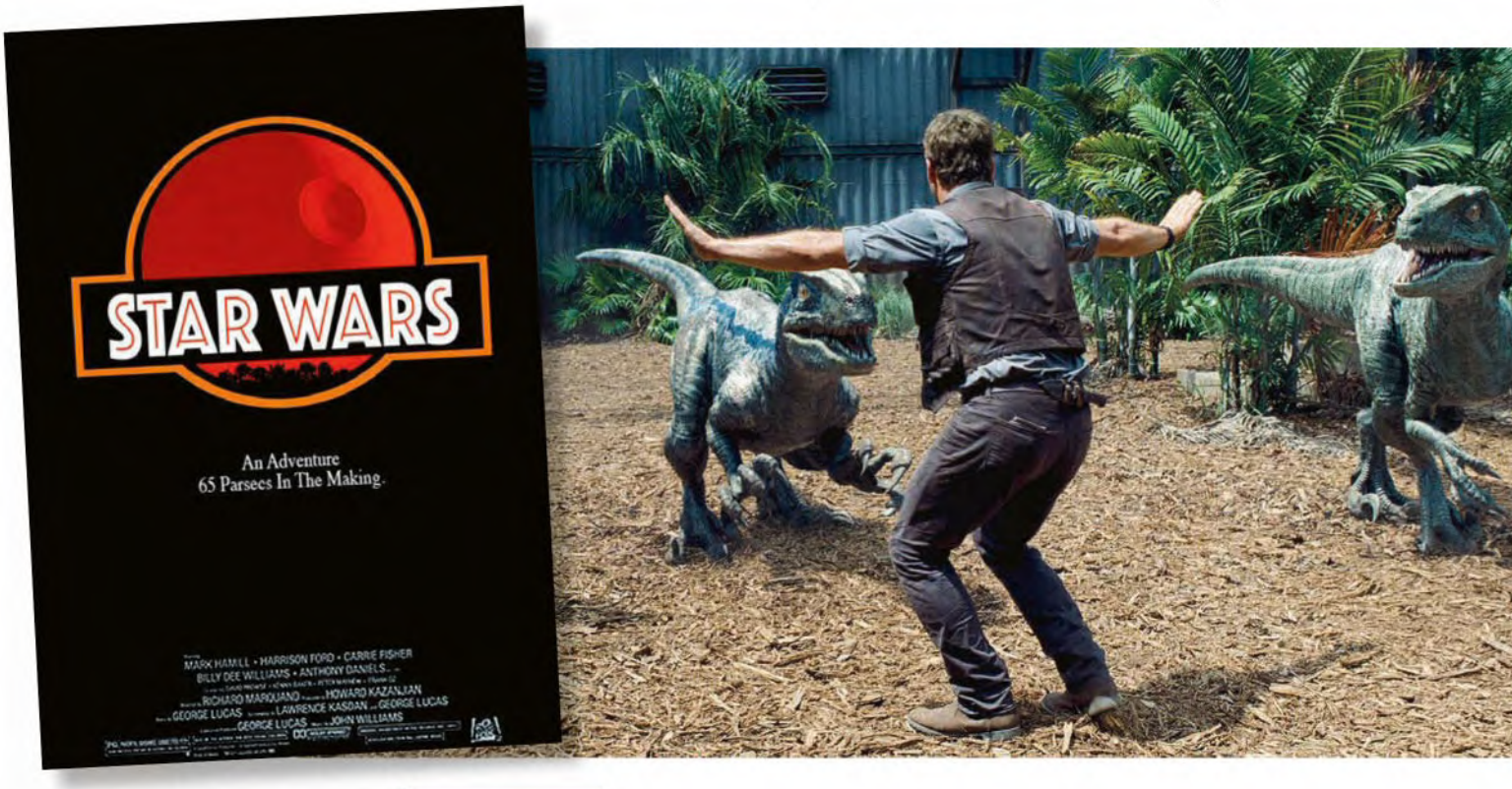
Hi there. Long time reader, third time pedant. As the proud owner of a LEGO Ecto-1 I can say that the description of it in your magazine has one mistake. It says Bill Murray's Peter Venkman is the one with dark hair riding on Ecto-1. That's actually Dan Aykroyd's Ray Stantz. Venkman is the one with the lighter brown hair by the front of the vehicle. As you can imagine, I'm rather fun at parties.

KYM SPICER, HUNTFIELD HEIGHTS SA

Your invite to the* Empire *staff Christmas party is in the mail, Kym...

JURASSIC WARS

Hey! I'm 14 and I've always been a fan of *Empire* magazine so I thought I'd send through some fan art I put together. I did this *Star Wars*/*Jurassic Park* mash-up as they're easily my two favourite movies



and I cannot wait for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Enjoy!

JOSH CHAPMAN, VIA EMAIL

Nice work Josh! Your movie mash-up skills are exemplary.

STAR WARS: THE NEXT GENERATION

As I write this email it is officially 49 days until *The Force Awakens* is released. As a child of the 2000s I never really got to experience the prequel craze (which honestly I'm fine with). However, 10 years after *Revenge Of The Sith*, I now get to experience *Star Wars* the way it was meant to be. When I go on the internet and read the comments on the trailers I love seeing the age gaps of all these people who are gearing up for the movie. When my dad was a kid he and his family went and saw the original trilogy. Now as an adult he is reliving the experience by taking his son to experience a new trilogy of *Star Wars* films. Now I know not to get too hyped, however this is *STAR WARS*! December 17th here we come!

JASPER FREDERICKSON, VIA EMAIL

There has been an awakening, and we have all indeed felt it. Crank the hype-o-meter up to 11!

BRING OUT THE GIMP

While I loved your selection of cameo appearances, I have to ask the following question: did you at least consider Channing Tatum as Danny McBride's gimp in *This Is The End*? Really hoping you did, because I thought it was next-level hilarious and worthy of an honourable mention.

WENDY MOFFITT, VIA EMAIL

To be honest it slipped our mind – we must've blocked it from our memory...

R.I.P. ORIGINAL IDEAS?

It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you of the death of something near and dear to our movie-loving hearts – the original idea! It seems like most movies these days are reboots or remakes. Some have been awesome (*Jurassic World*), but why can't studios leave our favourites alone (I'm looking at you *Point Break*) and come up with something new and fresh?

KARA, VIA EMAIL

The simple answer? $$$$$$$$$$, etc.

SPINE QUOTE HONOUR ROLE

#177

"You're not James Bond. I'm not Blofeld..."

THE FILM
The Breed (2001)

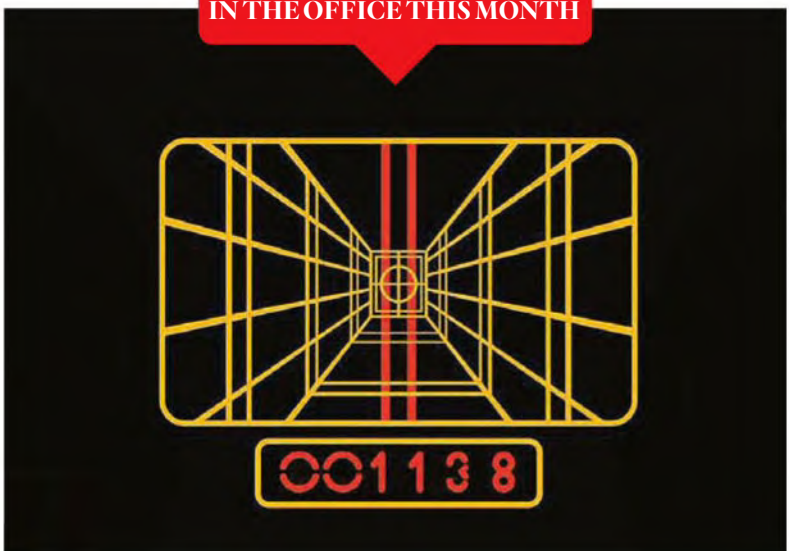
THE CONNECTION
Quite simply a James Bond / Blofeld reference for *Empire*'s *Spectre* issue!

THE WINNER
Wendy R., via email

THE REWARD
An *Empire* cap for you! Send answers to empire@bauer-media.com.au



IN THE OFFICE THIS MONTH



Observing *Star Wars*-obsessed *Empire* staff muttering "stay on target" to themselves when on deadline, intern extraordinaire Danny Mackenzie gifted us this amazing poster as an Xmas present. Best. Intern. Ever. Cheers Danny!



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

ET TU, ETHAN?

THE COENS RELOCATE TO '50S HOLLYWOOD WITH *HAIL, CAESAR!*

GOOD THINGS, SUCH AS George Clooney lying on a recliner dressed in a toga, come to those who wait. And for *Hail, Caesar!*, the latest from Joel and Ethan Coen, it's been quite a wait.

The film was first mooted back in 2004, when Clooney mentioned that it was going to be their next movie; the closer to the 'Numbskull Trilogy' that so far included *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and *Intolerable Cruelty,* and which boasted Clooney playing, well, a numbskull. There was just one small problem. "It doesn't even exist as a script," sighed Joel at the time. "It's only an idea. We kind of teased George with the opportunity to play another numbskull. He was totally up for it."

That idea was a movie set in 1920s Hollywood (a decade before *Barton Fink* arrived in town), and concerned the troubled production of a studio epic set in ancient Rome. But as it turns out, it also went away for a few years while the brothers focused on other projects. By

BULLETIN >> RACHEL MCADAMS AND MADS MIKKELSEN JOIN *DOCTOR STRANGE* CAST > FEMALE



the time Joel and Ethan came back to it, the Numbskull Trilogy already had a third part, in the guise of 2008's *Burn After Reading*. Trilogies can come in four parts though — just ask Douglas Adams.

This version of *Hail, Caesar!* differs from the 2004 vintage, it seems, in one key area: the time period. Now, it's set in 1950s Hollywood, and centres on Eddie Mannix, a Hollywood fixer based on legendary private eye Fred Otash (inspiration for Jack Nicholson's Jake Gittes in *Chinatown*) in the guise of ›

MEMBER TO FEATURE IN *MEN IN BLACK 4* › *KICKBOXER* REMAKE SEQUEL GREENLIT



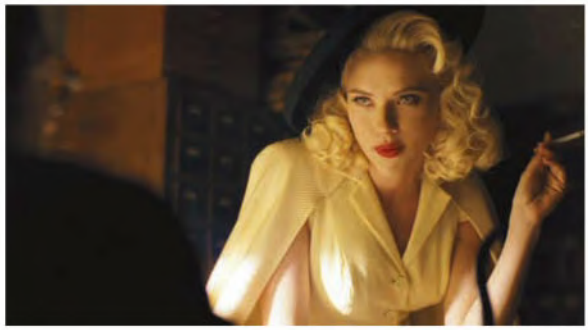
Josh Brolin. Mannix is investigating the mysterious disappearance of Clooney's Baird Whitlock, the preening star of the studio's latest movie, a Roman epic called — you've got it — Hail, Caesar!

So far, so numbskull. Yet, surprisingly, Carter Burwell, the Coens' regular composer, claims the film is "not actually funny. It's serious". But here's Ralph Fiennes, who plays a director called Laurence Lorenz. "It was two, three days," he tells us. "I had one fantastic cameo. It was comedic." Who to believe? According to the pathologically non-committal Ethan Coen, "It's about the movie business and life and religion and faith. It's still George."

Indeed, it's Clooney who seems to shift the plot into gear when Whitlock is kidnapped by a sinister organisation known as The Future. And he is most definitely a numbskull. So we shouldn't take that "serious" too seriously. The film is clearly operating in the mode of *Burn After Reading* or *The Big Lebowski*, with kidnapping, mad conspiracies and a bumbling gumshoe at its heart.

Take a beady eye to the trailer and the Coenisms stack up. You'll no doubt have spotted Fred Melamed from *A Serious Man* and Michael Lerner, who played studio gasbag Jack Lipnick in *Barton Fink*. Is he still Jack Lipnick?

Despite the Coens' propensity for transforming A-listers into total idiots, it seems everybody in Hollywood is involved. As well as Brolin, Clooney and Fiennes, there's Channing Tatum as a fresh-faced star currently shooting a musical, including such numbers as *Merrily We Can Dance*. (Burwell mentions a "tap dance water number".)





Above: Channing Tatum, Scarlett Johansson and Josh Brolin in *Hail, Caesar!*.

Scarlett Johansson plays an Esther Williams-style aquatic darling, while Tilda Swinton portrays real-life gossip columnist Hedda Hopper. And then there's Dolph Lundgren. In a Coen brothers movie. What's the rumpus?

"They called me out of nowhere," he admits. "They wanted someone to play a submarine commander. So I'm wearing a Russian fur hat and I'm on this submarine in Malibu." That Coen brothers feeling can't get here soon enough. **IAN NATHAN**

***HAIL, CAESAR!* IS OUT ON MARCH 3, 2016.**

ON THE RADAR



Steve Zahn has joined the cast of *War For The Planet Of The Apes*. He'll be a monkey mate of Andy Serkis's Caesar. Not Tar-Zahn.



Ant-Man is finally getting a partner. Not Dec-Man – Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly will team up for *Ant-Man And The Wasp*.



Fact: the 'F' in F. Gary Gray stands for 'Fast&Furious8'. Handily, that's also the name of the movie he's just been hired to direct.



Seth Grahame-Smith will direct Ezra Miller as The Flash, due in 2018. Get a move on, so-called Fastest Man Alive.

> RYAN GOSLING BEING SOUGHT FOR DAMIEN CHAZELLE'S NEIL ARMSTRONG BIOPIC



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They're so hot right now: Hansel (Owen Wilson), Derek Zoolander (Ben Stiller) and Montana Grosso (Penélope Cruz) in *Zoolander 2*.

> CHRIS HEMSWORTH WANTS *THOR: RAGNAROK* TO INCLUDE MORE *GAURDIANS*-STYLE HUMOUR



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

NEW STEEL

ZOOLANDER 2 IS HERE – IT'S ORANGE MOCHA FRAPPUCCINO TIME!

***ZOOLANDER 2* HAS HAD SO MANY FALSE** starts that it seemed the world's dimmest male model would never return. Don't write those eugooglies just yet: 15 years after the original, Derek Zoolander is back. So, why the long wait?

"Honestly," says Ben Stiller, who again directs and stars, "maybe if it had been a big hit when it first came out we would've done a sequel. It took a while for people to actually care!" The first movie, which opened shortly after 9/11 in 2001, grossed just $61 million globally. But in time it found an audience on DVD, and Stiller started work in earnest on the sequel. "The one thing I wanted to do was take the movie out of the environment it was in before, so it would have its own flavour."

The movie begins with Zoolander in a very different place, following "a big disaster" at the Derek Zoolander Center For Kids Who Can't Read Good And Who Wanna Learn To Do Other Stuff Good Too. "So he leaves society. He just retires from everything, and goes to live on a mountain in extreme northern New Jersey."

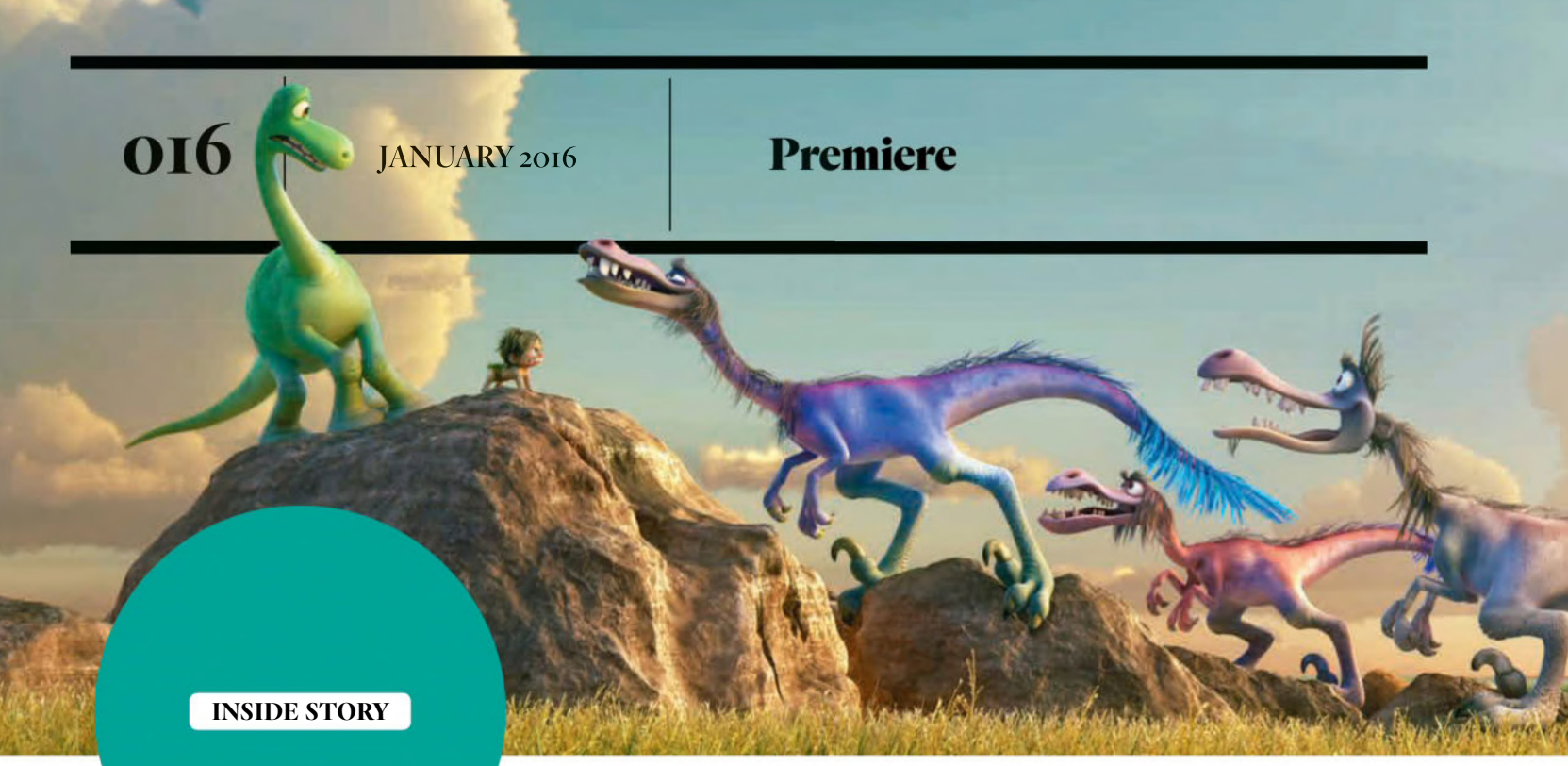
How Zoolander and his BFF Hansel (Owen Wilson) get drawn into a Dan Brown-style conspiracy involving notable A-listers remains to be seen, but it involves faces old (Will Ferrell is back as Mugatu, inventor of the piano-key necktie) and new (including Kristen Wiig and Penélope Cruz, seen here as swimsuit-model-turned-Interpol-agent, Montana Grosso).

Stiller admits that he's had fun exploring the impact of ageing on Derek and Hansel, who are, perhaps, not as really, really, ridiculously good-looking as they once were. "The whole movie is predicated on what's been happening for the last 15 years," says Stiller. "Time has gone forward, the fashion world has changed, and they've been forgotten, basically."

One thing that hasn't changed is how often Stiller gets asked to do Zoolander's signature look. "Doing the movie I was in character so much that it became second nature," he laughs. "If someone wanted a picture with me, they'd be like, 'Oh, you're doing Blue Steel,' and I'd be like, 'Sorry.'" **DAMON WISE**

***ZOOLANDER 2* IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 11.**

> KEVIN BACON TO RETURN IN *TREMORS* TV SERIES > *FANTASTIC FOUR* SEQUEL ON HOLD



INSIDE STORY

CAN PIXAR GO TWO FOR TWO IN 2015?

PIXAR PRESIDENT JIM MORRIS TALKS *INSIDE OUT* FOLLOW-UP *THE GOOD DINOSAUR* – A FILM THAT UNDERWENT AN EXTENSIVE 11TH HOUR OVERHAUL...

***The Good Dinosaur* had quite an overhaul mid-production — director Bob Peterson was replaced with Peter Sohn, voices were recast, the plot was redone…**

Yes, but it's not a unique case. Bob had come up with an amazing idea and it was really entertaining. We had been working on it a number of years and realised something wasn't quite right. We needed a fresh perspective on it and Pete was already the co-director, so we asked him to come in and do a fresh take. There are a number of things in it that echo the original one; the basic story is completely different but we've preserved the Arlo and Spot characters.

Overhauling things is a luxury that animation has over live action…

I think even in animation it's difficult to have the strength of conviction and studio support to scrap something that you've put so much money into, to be honest. I count my lucky stars that Disney has been great at letting us try to clean up our messes [*laughs*]. I certainly think that the structure of making an animated film is a little more amenable to making significant changes though, as you're suggesting.

Above: Dinosaurs (the good one is on the rock). **Below:** Pixar President Jim Morris.



***The Good Dinosaur* boasts photo-realistic landscapes. How was that effect achieved?**

Since we realised nature was a character and was something that needed to be real and menacing to our protagonists, it needed to take a different flavour than what we'd already done. One of the things we did was take US geological survey scans and used that data as the geometry, then someone painted the look of the land, populated it with rocks and leaves and things like that. I think it had a pretty profound effect on the film.

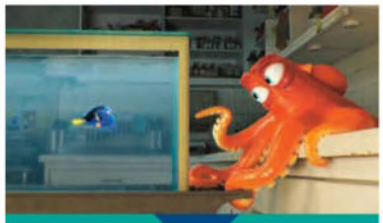
Can you give us an update on *Toy Story 4*? People are nervous…

It's a fine line between bold and brave and bold and stupid. We were all hesitant to do another. Andrew [*Stanton*] and John [*Lasseter*] came up with an idea that they liked a lot, so Andrew is coming out of director's retirement to make it. I am as frightened as anyone, but it's a great story and I saw the last set of story reels two weeks ago and I was really sucked into it. It's gonna be great.

JAMES JENNINGS

THE GOOD DINOSAUR IS OUT DECEMBER 26 AND IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 38.

UPCOMING PIXAR



FINDING DORY (2016)
Finding Nemo writer-director Andrew Stanton brings all the old faves back as Dory (Ellen DeGeneres) searches for family.

CARS 3 (2017)
John Lasseter brings Lightning McQueen and the gang back a third time, possibly because *Cars* and *Cars 2* have made a billion-plus.

COCO (2017)
A 12-year-old Mexican boy gets to hang out in the afterlife in this tale set around Mexico's famous Day Of The Dead festival.

TOY STORY 4 (2018)
A stand-alone film rather than a straight sequel to *Toy Story 3*, this is being described as a love story centred on Woody and Bo Peep.

THE INCREDIBLES 2 (2019)
Brad Bird brings his super-family back, with Samuel L. Jackson stating that Frozone is likely to make a reappearance.

> OCEAN MASTER RUMOURED AS VILLAIN IN *AQUAMAN* > *RIDDICK* SEQUEL BEING WRITTEN

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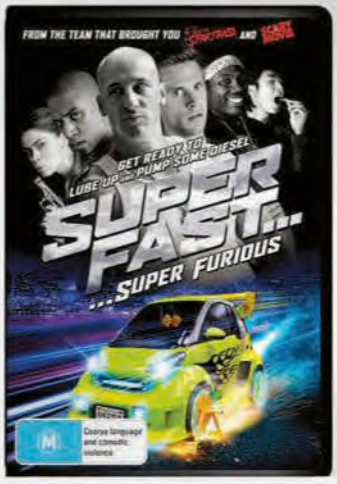








THRILLS AND CHILLS





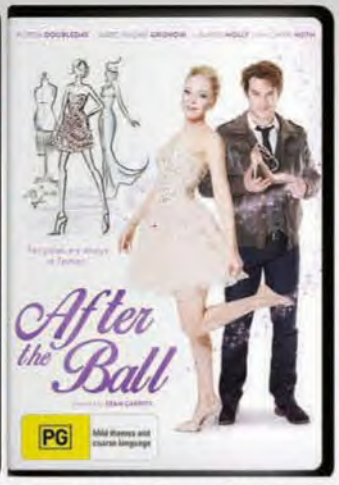




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BRADLEY COOPER

EVERYTHING YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE *JOY* PLAYER, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK



BEST AND WORST ON ROTTEN TOMATOES

93%
AMERICAN HUSTLE
(2013)

0%
BROTHER'S JUSTICE
(2010)

GREATEST QUOTES

"We f@#ked up."
THE HANGOVER

"You have to do everything you can, you have to work your hardest, and if you do, if you stay positive, you have a shot at a silver lining."
SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK

"Well, now I'm standing. Happy? We're all standing now. Bunch of jackasses, standing in a circle."
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

• PEGGY SIROTA / TRUNKARCHIVE.COM

> *BLACK MASS* DIRECTOR SCOTT COOPER IN TALKS FOR THRILLER *WHITE KNIGHT*

COOPER BY NUMBERS

3

CONSECUTIVE ACTING OSCAR NOMINATIONS FROM 2013-2015 *(Silver Linings Playbook, American Hustle, American Sniper)*

2

AVENGERS WORKED WITH

29

THE AGE AT WHICH HE QUIT DRINKING

14

HIS SHOE SIZE

HIS FIRST ROLE



AS JAKE ON A 1999 EPISODE OF *SEX AND THE CITY*. HE COPPED OFF WITH SARAH JESSICA PARKER BUT DIDN'T SEAL THE DEAL.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH



BRAD COOPER

Australian Olympic swimming champion



HE TOOK ARGUABLY THE MOST FAMOUS SELFIE OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

DEAD RINGER

Cooper does impressions of the following celebrities:
Bill Clinton Owen Wilson Robert De Niro Christopher Walken



Best and worst US box office (adjusted for inflation)

$350,126,372

American Sniper

$83,361

Midnight Meat Train

DID YOU KNOW?

He's appeared on *Inside The Actors Studio* more than any other person bar James Lipton... but on a technicality. As a student at the Studio, he was actually in the audience for the Robert De Niro and Sean Penn episodes. He did eventually have his own episode in 2011.

TRIVIA

- In Israel, *The Hangover* is known as *Stopping In Vegas On The Way To A Wedding.*



- Cooper speaks fluent French, and has appeared on chat shows in France speaking the language. Show-off.

- He won a Golden Raspberry Award in 2010 – Worst Screen Couple for *All About Steve*, with Sandra Bullock.





THE ROCKET LIST

He's one of 11 actors to have voiced Rocket Raccoon over the years.

Jonny Rees
Steve Blum
John DiMaggio
Nolan North
Billy West
Trevor Devall
Bradley Cooper
Kyle Jordan
Bret Newton
John Alexander
Seth Green

• GETTY IMAGES, REX FEATURES, SHUTTERSTCOK

› MARTIN SCORSESE TO POSSIBLY DIRECT BIOPIC OF EVEL KNIEVEL

007 SPECTRE SECRETS

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!

AS TOLD TO US BY M HIMSELF, SAM MENDES



001 Mendes wanted Blofeld for *Skyfall*

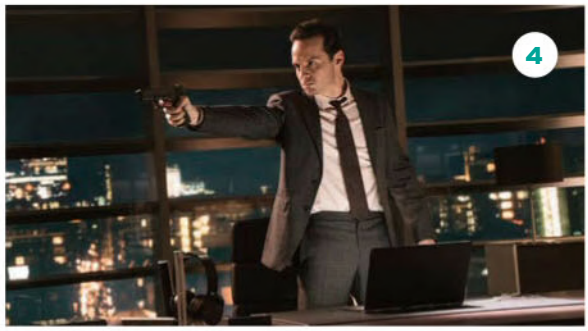
So, the Persian cat's out of the bag. After months of *Spectre*-related subterfuge, Christoph Waltz's Franz Oberhauser, to the surprise of nobody, was revealed as über-nemesis Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Yet, if Mendes had had his druthers, he'd have introduced Blofeld earlier. "We talked about it on the last movie [*Skyfall*], whether it was worth it or even possible," he told *Empire*. "I had always loved the idea, but couldn't work out how to make it anything more than a character turning up with the name Blofeld." At the time it was impossible, due to a legal battle with the estate of *Thunderball* producer Kevin McClory, which held the rights to SPECTRE and Blofeld. That cleared up just after *Spectre* went into development.

002 The Name's Wocky... Jabberwocky

Mendes revealed that early conversations with Waltz about Blofeld centred around an unlikely source of material. "We quoted back and forth to each other by email *Jabberwocky*, Lewis Carroll's poem." Look carefully as Bond and Madeleine Swann sift through Mr. White's secret room in Tangier, and you'll see a drawing of the Jabberwock on the wall. It may seem an unlikely reference, but when you hear 'all mimsy were the borogoves/and the mome raths outgrabe', how can you think of anything but Bond?

003 Blofeld's cat lives!

The first clear nod that Oberhauser is Blofeld comes when Bond awakens after being knocked out to find a very familiar pussy lazing around. Minutes later, Blofeld's secret desert lair is engulfed in flame, using up most of, but not all, the moggy's lives. "It doesn't even get a singe," laughs Mendes. "It's doing its business outside." PETA will be relieved.







004 Blofeld wasn't always the Big Bad

The film's tertiary villain is Andrew Scott's Denbigh, a techno-savvy MI5 wonk willing to sell out Queen and country. That's something of a demotion from previous drafts of the *Spectre* script. "There was a long period where it flipped and it turned out that he was the person who was running the show."

005 We Know Who 009 Is

The Aston Martin DB10 (co-designed by Mendes) that Bond, essentially, nicks and then destroys in Rome was intended – Sinatra soundtrack and all – for the hapless 009. We never glimpse the unfortunate agent, but Mendes told us who he would cast if the opportunity arose. "You can lay a trail of clues," he laughed. Okay, then: the actor has been previously linked with the role of Bond, his wife once appeared in a Bond movie, he's best known for his work on US TV, and he's got a lovely head of red hair.

006 The Truth About The Opening Shot(s)

The film opens with a stunning four-and-a-half-minute tracking shot. "It's actually four shots morphed together," says Mendes of the sequence, which blends shots filmed in Mexico City and on a Pinewood soundstage. "I challenge you to spot them." We'll give you one: there's a wipe as an extra walks across camera when Bond walks into his hotel room.

007 Craig Not Bond

The movie ends with Bond driving off into the sunset (or early-morning London traffic), with Léa Seydoux's Madeleine by his side. The clear implication: his licence to kill might be expiring. Craig, who has an option for one more movie, has said this might be his last. "If he chooses to sign off with this movie, he's doing so in style," says Mendes. "I wanted Bond to decide to leave. To me, when he turns around at the end and says, 'I've got something better to do,' he means it." **CHRIS HEWITT**

***SPECTRE* IS OUT NOW AND IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 36.**

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THE BEASTIE BOY

FIRST LOOK!

EDDIE REDMAYNE HEADS UP *FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM*, AKA THE NEW *HARRY POTTER*

WIZARDS WIZARDING. DAVID YATES AT the helm. J.K. Rowling at the keyboard. *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* begs the question: when is a *Harry Potter* film not a *Harry Potter* film?

The answer: when Harry Potter isn't in it. And, as *Fantastic Beasts* is set in 1926, almost seven decades before Harry first stroked his wand in anger, don't expect to see Daniel Radcliffe running around here.

Instead, *Fantastic Beasts* centres on Newton Artemis Fido Scamander — or Newt for short. Played by Eddie Redmayne, he's a young magizoologist (think David Attenborough meets David Copperfield) who arrives in New York with his magical hand luggage, which contains a variety of strange animals he's gathered on his travels around the world. Unfortunately, some of the creatures soon escape, plunging Newt into an extraordinary adventure as he tries to recover them.

After *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows — Part 2*, Warner Bros. was in something of a quandary. *Potter* is still insanely popular, of course (tickets for *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*, the Rowling-penned play that will pick up Harry's story as an adult, sold out in minutes), but there were no more books to mine. Well, almost.

In 2001, Rowling wrote a slim volume called *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*. 'Written' by Scamander, it was a fun companion piece to the Potterverse, but seemingly little more. Until 2013, when Warner Bros. announced that it was using the book as a basis for a new trilogy, with Rowling herself penning the script. The emphasis here seems to be on fun, with Potter veteran Yates exploring a very different tone. With a cracking cast — Colin Farrell, Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller and Ron Perlman are also on board — a new franchise is born. Expecto blockbusterum? CHRIS HEWITT

***FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM* IS OUT LATE 2016.**



> JOCELYN MOORHOUSE SET TO DIRECT CLASSICAL MUSIC DRAMA *CLARA* > TEENAGE SUPERMAN



THE INSIDE TRACK

The *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* book was written by Rowling for Comic Relief. It's just 42 pages long.

STREAMING NOW!

HO-HO-HO

BILL MURRAY USHERS IN THE FESTIVE SEASON WITH *A VERY MURRAY CHRISTMAS*



HOLLYWOOD DOESN'T have the greatest relationship with variety shows, as anyone unfortunate enough to seek out the dignity-digesting sarlacc that is the *Star Wars Holiday Special* will attest. Undaunted, however, Netflix is entering the fray this season with possibly the greatest gift of them all: Bill Murray.

It's hard to say exactly how *A Very Murray Christmas* will end up, since the busy elves in Netflix's streaming workshop are keeping the whole thing under wraps. But this we know: it's part old-school variety special, as Murray puts on a Christmas show at The Carlyle Hotel in New York with a few of his closest celebrity chums; and, as it's Bill Murray, part meta-commentary on an old-school variety special. There will be singing, courtesy of Phoenix and Miley Cyrus. There will be dancing. There will be cameos from a coterie of Murray's celebrity chums, including Amy Poehler, Chris Rock and Jason Schwartzman. Oh, and there will be George Clooney, in a tux, popping his head out from behind a cheap Christmas tree to join in with the merriment. "Every single person in it just absolutely did something they'd never done before," Murray said recently. "They reached a level in themselves that I'd never seen."

Murray, Hollywood's favourite wacky uncle, hasn't been this Christmassy since 1988's *Scrooged*. And he hopes that this year's special will reawaken the festive spirit he experienced as a child. "Christmas was just waking up and feeling that feeling of, 'Oh my God, life is good,'" recalled Murray. "It was a free zone. Everybody's in a good mood."

The variety show also marks a reunion for Murray with Sofia Coppola, who's directing, for the first time since *Lost In Translation*. Maybe, if we're all good boys and girls, we'll finally find out what he whispered to Scarlett Johansson at the end of that movie… Our money's on, "Let's have a turkey lunch and get in the queue for the Myer sale." **CHRIS HEWITT**



2

***A VERY MURRAY CHRISTMAS* IS AVAILABLE ON NETFLIX NOW.**

> ANGELINA JOLIE PITT TO POSSIBLY STAR AS THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN?







1 Murray with Paul Shaffer, Clooney and... Miley Cyrus.
2 Amy Poehler comforts Murray backstage.
3 Murray and Chris Rock croon for Christmas.
4 Murray and his celeb chums round the old Joanna.

> NEIL BLOMKAMP'S SHELVED *ALIEN* SEQUEL REPORTEDLY TO FEATURE AN ADULT NEWT



EXCLUSIVE SET REPORT

VICTORIAN SECRET

Holmes and Watson go back in time for the *Sherlock* Christmas special

> NEIL MARSHALL INVOLVED IN *LOST IN SPACE* REMAKE FOR NETFLIX > MORE *SHERLOCK*







Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes, Martin Freeman's Watson and Una Stubbs's Mrs. Hudson as you've never seen them before.

THERE ARE THINGS WE could tell you about the new *Sherlock* Christmas special, *The Abominable Bride*. Things you think you want to know, that would prick the mystery and let all its secrets seep out. But you don't really want to know them. "I have a theory on this, psychologically, because of course I am a doctor," says Mark Gatiss, who is one of *Sherlock*'s creators and not a doctor, as he huddles into a tent away from a flurry of (fake) snow. "When people want the show spoiled. It's called 'anticipointment': that brief moment of euphoria when you find out something you shouldn't, followed by the crash of disappointment that you've ruined it."

Every time a new *Sherlock* episode is announced, the clamour for clues is instant. What's in the title? What does the casting mean? This one is even more confounding than most. On the London set, where snow machines are turning a mild February into squally midwinter, things don't seem quite right. The exterior of 221B Baker Street looks much the same, but the grubby café beneath it has become a genteel tea shop. The people bustling past are in top hats and bonnets. And Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock is, without irony, wearing a deerstalker and a fetching cape. It all looks like an etching from one of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* books, and not the 21st century show we've come to love over the past few years. What on earth is going on?

"We've been joking since the beginning about whether we could get away with doing an episode in Victorian dress," says Steven Moffat, *Sherlock*'s co-creator. "Honestly, to do [*our Holmes and Watson*] with gas lamps and top hats and hansom cabs, as a full-on Gothic treat, is completely irresistible. This is our tenth one and the show's been an unbelievable international success, so we feel like we've earned it."

So *The Abominable Bride* is not a continuation of the last *Sherlock* episode, but a one-off in an alternative, rather stiffer universe — that of the late 1800s. In other words, where and when Conan Doyle's stories were set. That title doesn't appear anywhere in any of Conan Doyle's books, so it seems we're not in for the usual twist on an existing story, but we do know that there are murders, that there's a significant part for John Watson's mysterious wife, Mary (Amanda Abbington), who gets a very sinister intro, and from rooting around the costume department we know there's definitely an actual bride.

What we do know, because we've seen it happen, is this: at some point, Holmes and Watson (Martin Freeman) will walk through the front door of their shared abode and Mrs. Hudson (Una Stubbs) will look at them tersely. Let the conspiracy theories commence.

"My first question was, 'Can I get a haircut?'" says Cumberbatch of his reaction to Moffat and Gatiss's audacious pitch. By way of context, the London-born actor has hated his "ridiculous long curls" since series one. "The second question was, 'Whhhaaaatttt?!' I thought they'd lost it. But that was rather like my reaction when I first heard the idea of modernising *Sherlock*. Why fix something that ain't broken? It was very much the same journey with this. I just thought you can't get away with that because it's bonkers. Then the whole thing was explained to me and it's utterly brilliant. It's going to be a lot of fun."

Freeman, who, thanks to the Victorian setting, sports a great big bushy 'tache, had a different take on it.

"I felt like I was hearing about this one as an audience member," he says. "I was excited on behalf of the audience more than I was for myself. It's still basically the same show but just that simple change of perspective is enough to give it a new shot of energy."

For all the joy there is in seeing Sherlock playing dress-up, the arrival of a new episode that doesn't obviously tie in to the current *Sherlock* story does beg the question: When the *hell* are we going to find out how Moriarty came back from the dead at the end of series three? Series four, we're told, will finally start shooting in "spring". "It is amazingly difficult to pin everyone down," says Freeman. "Everyone's so busy now. So you'll see the next episodes by 2025." Well, since Sherlock time travels now, maybe 'Sherlock in the future' wouldn't be the worst idea… **OLLY RICHARDS**

***SHERLOCK: THE ABOMINABLE BRIDE* WILL BE AVAILABLE ON STAN FROM JANUARY 2, FOLLOWED BY A LIMITED THEATRICAL RELEASE.**

• ROBERT VIGLASKY/BBC PICTURES

TV SPECIALS POSSIBLE > SONIA BRAGA JOINS NETFLIX'S MARVEL TV SERIES *LUKE CAGE*

MOVIE MASTERMIND

BRAD BIRD

WILL THE PIXAR GENIUS GET AN INCREDIBLES SCORE?

WORDS **NICK DE SEMLYEN**



1 Three movie characters are wielded as weapons in the store fight in your film *Tomorrowland*. Which ones?
One of them is Gort from *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. The Millennium Falcon gets clonked over somebody's head. Then there's a spear from *Star Trek*. So that's three, but they're not all people.
1/2 The correct answer is Gort, Han Solo and R2-D2.

2 You have a voice cameo in *Jurassic World* as the monorail announcer. What comment do you make about the entrance gate?
That it's made from the wood of the original Jurassic Park gate. Colin [*Trevorrow*] and I decided this guy was an aspiring actor, who prepares for every monorail announcement as if it's a great performance.
✔ CORRECT

3 List every city seen in *Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol* in order.
The beginning is... Budapest? Second one is Moscow. Then Dubai... Mumbai... [*long pause*]... San Francisco and Seattle.
✔ CORRECT

4 What's the name of the laxative that Hogarth puts on Mansley's ice cream in *The Iron Giant*?
Choco-Lax. No — Coco-Lax! We haven't had offers from laxative companies yet, but the tie-in possibilities are amazing.
✔ CORRECT

5 You directed the *Do The Bartman* music video. Can you complete this stanza: "Yo! Hey, what's happening, dude?"
"I'm the something known for being rude." God, man, you're really making me go back! *Do The Bartman* is not on my iPod.
1/2 The correct answer is, "I'm the guy with the rep for being rude."





6 In *Family Dog*, your episode of *Amazing Stories*, what outfit does terrifying dog trainer Gerte LeStrange wear?
Well, it's black and kinda pointy-looking. That's not something I've revisited for a while. Mercedes McCambridge was amazing as Gerte.
1/2 It's a black frock with bone insignia on the front.

7 How does Splashdown meet his end in *The Incredibles*' no-capes montage?
Sucked into a vortex.
✔ CORRECT

8 Which wine does Anton Ego order to go with his dinner in *Ratatouille*?
I think it was Château Lafite. Oh, it's Cheval Blanc? If somebody really wants to be a dick and they know you're paying for dinner, that's the wine they order!
✘ INCORRECT It's a Cheval Blanc 1947.

9 In *Jack-Jack Attack*, the babysitter puts on music by which composer?
Mozart. There were studies that went out that Mozart stimulated your baby's imagination. Classical music, wine… In case you're getting the idea that I'm sophisticated, I'm not at all. I'm a sophisticated burger-eater!
✔ CORRECT

10 Who says, "Welcome to America!" to the little aliens in the film **batteries not included*?
I have a screenplay credit but didn't write that line. Is it the Hume Cronyn character? It is? Boom!
✔ CORRECT Cronyn's character name is Frank Riley.

***TOMORROWLAND* IS OUT NOW ON BLU-RAY, DVD AND DIGITAL DOWNLOAD.**

SCORECARD DIRECTORS



Robert Rodriguez David O. Russell Quentin Tarantino	9
Guillermo del Toro	8.5
Werner Herzog	8.5
Bryan Singer	8
John Waters	8
BRAD BIRD	**7.5**
Dario Argento	7
Peter Bogdanovich	7
Roger Corman	7
Richard Linklater	7
George A. Romero	7
John Landis	6.5
Paul Schrader	6.5
Cameron Crowe	6
Baz Luhrmann	6
Judd Apatow	5
Terry Gilliam	5
Jim Sheridan	5
Roland Emmerich	4.5
Wes Craven	4
John Carpenter	3
John Woo	3

BRAD SCORES 7½/10

"That was a little nerve-wracking. I expected to be right down there with Alan Smithee on the scoreboard. I'm kicking myself about Gerte's bones."

• ANNIE TRITT/THE NEW YORK TIMES/HEADPRESS



CLASSIC PIC

JUST CHILLIN'

DIRECTOR AND CAST, FROZEN IN TIME

THE EXTERIORS FOR *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* Hoth sequence were shot in frigid Norway, the interiors in comparatively snug Pinewood Studios, UK. So, why is everyone in this candid shot (how priceless is the look on Harrison Ford's face?) rugged up to the eyeballs? The studio was refrigerated, to enhance the reality for the ice-walled Rebellion HQ. Ten bucks to find out what was said to the photographer straight after this.

> *PROMETHEUS* SEQUEL *ALIEN: COVENANT* BEGINS SHOOTING IN SYDNEY APRIL 2016

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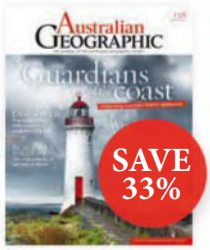
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Cinemas

EDITED by JAMES JENNINGS

NEW MOVIES REVIEWED AND RATED | DECEMBER 14 — JANUARY 10, 2016

THE EMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE | UNMISSABLE ★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ GOOD ★★★ POOR ★★ TRAGIC ★



The Revenant

★★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 7** / RATED **TBC** / **151 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Alejandro G. Iñárritu
CAST Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter

PLOT The harsh wilderness of America's upper-midwest, 1823. After fleeing a brutal attack from native Arikara warriors, fur trapper Hugh Glass (DiCaprio) is mauled by a grizzly bear. Betrayed and left for dead by fellow trapper John Fitzgerald (Hardy), Glass miraculously survives and begins a gruelling 320 kilometre trek to find Fitzgerald and exact his revenge...

BOTH ARRIVING FRESH OFF blackly comic satires about power mad men battling their own out of control egos, it's little surprise that director-writer Alejandro G. Iñárritu (2015's Oscar-scooping *Birdman Or (The Unexpected Virtue Of Ignorance)*) and actor Leonardo DiCaprio (Jordan Belfort in 2014's Oscar-courting *The Wolf Of Wall Street*) were drawn to *The Revenant*: an earthier — and resolutely humour-free — based-on-truth tale that has the far more primal concerns of survival and revenge locked in its unflinching sights. And while DiCaprio's pragmatic fur trapper and frontiersman Hugh Glass has his own internal demons to fight (not to mention treacherous work colleagues, boorish French soldiers and out-for-blood natives), the main event here is Man Vs. Nature — and it's a blood-soaked, bone-cracking and brutal tussle that will leave your nerves shredded by the time credits roll.



Leonardo DiCaprio, magnificent as embattled Hugh Glass – *The Revenant* of the title.

The narrative thrust of *The Revenant* is a particularly simple one — man must survive the elements and horrific injuries to avenge the murder of a loved one — but the basic premise only sets a wide canvas where master craftsmen like Iñárritu and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki (Terrence Malick's go-to guy and Oscar winner for *Gravity* and *Birdman*) get to fully stretch their wings. The latter captures the ice-caked mountains, rivers and woodlands of Canada (where most of the film was shot) in nothing but natural light, and the results all but guarantee an Oscar hat-trick — Mother Nature's beauty and bleakness has rarely been portrayed on screen with such majesty and dazzling iridescence. Iñárritu takes full advantage of the remote locations with the lingering, meditative long-takes he used to such great effect in *Birdman*, presenting his actors with challenging scenes that were clearly choreographed to within an inch of their lives. The stunning results speak for themselves: whether it's a heart-pounding raid from marauding Arikara warriors or Glass's lengthy mauling from a grizzly bear — a scene so intense that it'll have audiences contorting and gurning in phantom pain — Iñárritu has crafted an immersive film that is a technical marvel.

It's all for nought, of course, without a compelling lead, and DiCaprio's gruellingly physical and largely dialogue-free performance (it's a toss-up between Leo and co-star Tom 'Mad Max' Hardy who gets the least lines as a film's headliner) is what carries the film (the actor's qaalude-induced, Jerry Lewis-esque crawl to his Lambo in *Wolf* is a mere warm-up compared to the marathon crawling that occurs here). Domnhall Gleeson's expedition leader Captain Henry is a welcome noble presence and Hardy does good crazy (and another of his famous semi-comprehensible accents) as Glass's nemesis Fitzgerald, but it's DiCaprio's show: as the 'revenant' of the title (an animated corpse who returns from the grave to terrorise the living), he is both haunted and ferocious, slipping between determination and defeat with heartbreaking regularity and showing steadfast commitment to the rigours required of his role (in the film the vegetarian eats a real raw bison liver and has a kip in an animal carcass that makes Luke's Taun Taun experience look like a cushy stay at the Park Hyatt). Your move, Messrs Bale and Gyllenhaal.

JAMES JENNINGS

VERDICT Like Glass's ordeal, the film is intense and at times almost too much to bear, but the journey will leave you in no doubt that you've witnessed filmmaking at its finest. Still, might be an idea for a whisky shot to come with your ticket.



Creed

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** / **132 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Ryan Coogler
CAST Michael B. Jordan, Sylvester Stallone, Tessa Thompson

PLOT Shunning his privileged life in LA, Adonis Johnson (Jordan) – the son of deceased boxing champion Apollo Creed – heads to Philadelphia to seek out his late father's friend and former boxing rival Rocky Balboa (Stallone) in the hopes the aging champ will train him.

OVER THE DECADES, THE *ROCKY* franchise has displayed the same kind of resilience and underdog appeal of its lead character — just when you think it's down for the count, it leaps up swinging. After 2006's well received *Rocky Balboa* provided a fitting coda to the series, it seemed like the champ had retired his boxing gloves for good. Not so.

Reimagining *Rocky* for Millennials is Ryan Coogler, writer-director of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning *Fruitvale Station*, here picking up the story of Adonis Johnson (*Fruitvale*'s Michael B. Jordan), an angry youth with daddy issues, raw boxing talent and a need to prove himself based on his own talents (hence the surname subterfuge).

Creed hits all of the boxing movie beats you'd expect, but the film generates goodwill and boasts a massive heart thanks to the appeal of the leads: Jordan commanding the screen with physical and emotional intensity as the dogged Adonis; Tessa Thompson as spirited musician neighbour/love interest Bianca and Stallone, who hasn't been this good on screen in decades. He radiates dignity and warmth when Rocky's saddled with one big final fight of his own, and what on paper seems like a cynical cash-in suddenly becomes the greatest *Rocky* film since, well, *Rocky*. **JAMES JENNINGS**

VERDICT A knockout success with kinetic action, appealing cast and a huge heart.

Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) and Adonis (Michael B. Jordan) punch some balls. (Steady up the back).



The Night Before

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **MA15+** / **101 MINS.**
DIRECTOR JONATHAN LEVINE
CAST JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT, SETH ROGEN, ANTHONY MACKIE

Thanks to the responsibilities of adulthood, three 30-something friends (see left) are about to end a tradition spending Christmas Eve together, begun in the wake of the death of Ethan's (Gordon-Levitt) parents in his teens. And, after years of trying, they scored tickets to New York's most exclusive party, The Nutcracker Ball. Cue drugs, drinks and misadventure. So far, so Harold and Kumar. Well, sorta: older and wiser. Jonathan Levine's bawdy-bongy take on Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (co-written with Rogen's producing partner Evan Goldberg) delivers a surprising and rare gross-out-cum-friendship-cum-Christmas fable that is both eye-wateringly hilarious and quite touching. The cast, including Jillian Bell and Lizzy Caplan, share an easy chemistry, cameos and superior knowing nods abound and one immutable truth emerges – you really can do anything to Miley Cyrus's *Wrecking Ball*. A cracker. **DANIEL MURPHY**



Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) takes aim.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** / **137 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Francis Lawrence
CAST Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth

PLOT The Districts, under District 13 leader Alma Coin (Julianne Moore), prepare for one final assault on the Capitol and President Snow (Donald Sutherland). Katniss (Lawrence) purely wants revenge on Snow for the brainwashing of her friend Peeta (Hutcherson) who has tried to kill her.

THIS FINAL *HUNGER GAMES* film is so relentlessly solemn that it will occasionally make you long for the merry japes of *Sicario*. But the seriousness of purpose in this astonishingly tense war movie is understandable. Picking up where *Mockingjay — Part 1* finished, the stakes could not be higher, nor our heroine's trauma more profound.

Of course, post-traumatic stress is pretty much the point. While the society of Panem examines how governments use fear to control us, the character stories are all about the damage caused by violence — both given and received. The ever-victorious Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) is just as broken as the brainwashed Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) or the twisted President Snow (Donald Sutherland). At times this film suggests that, even should she survive, there won't be much left of her.

Still, the emotional weight doesn't detract from a pulse-pounding journey. Director Francis Lawrence dreams up stunning action beats as Katniss and her squad pick their way through the ruined Capitol, avoiding the spectacular booby traps dreamt up by clearly demented Gamemakers. Over and under looming fascist architecture, stripped of all colour except grey, there are chase scenes straight out of horror and action that recalls *Star Wars* or *The Terminator* rather than the earlier *Games* films. Katniss aims to assassinate Snow and end the war — but of course, her plan doesn't go to plan.

Jennifer Lawrence is as tough as nails here, with steely eyes but cast-iron skin that threatens to shatter under just one more blow. She's not always helped by the script; one tragedy is brushed aside when it should be transformative, and the love triangle falls flat.

Perhaps with so much going on, not every moment could sing. Better are Philip Seymour Hoffman's final scenes ever, doing more with a tiny grin than most actors do with their entire careers, and a supporting cast of surpassing quality. It's not perfect but by the end (or endings — *Return Of The King*-style, there are several), fans will be satisfied that Lawrence and Lawrence have done Katniss proud. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT If anything, this is too faithful to the book, sometimes getting bogged down in detail as Katniss struggles to her goal. But its epic sweep, grand designs and unyielding central performance make this a compelling finale.



Spectre

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** / **148 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Sam Mendes
CAST Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Léa Seydoux, Ralph Fiennes, Ben Whishaw, Naomie Harris, Monica Bellucci

PLOT British spy James Bond (Craig) discovers that a vast terrorist group has been behind several villains he has faced in the past. With MI6 under threat from homegrown bureaucracy, Bond has to strike out alone against SPECTRE.

HAVING HANDLED *SKYFALL*, THE 50th-anniversary 007 entry, Sam Mendes is back for a direct sequel to the earlier film which also picks up story threads (and the odd character) from *Casino Royale* and *Quantum Of Solace*, and retcons Daniel Craig's run as James Bond into one slightly wonky super-saga. In effect, this is Craig's *You Only Live Twice*, down to the welcome return of the white cat of evil, revealing that there's always been one villain behind the hero's woes. The £41.7 million ($88.9 million) UK take in its first week, beating *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*'s record, would suggest that this return to core values that started with *Skyfall* is finding favour.

After three films more rooted in real-world worries than Pierce Brosnan's mostly fantastical vehicles, *Spectre* gets more bizarre, despite editorial about the relevance of licensed-to-kill boots on the ground in an age of drone espionage. After the deaths of four girlfriends and one surrogate mother, Craig's hardman-in-a-suit hero is finally allowed fun. When a beautiful woman mentions that the astonishing scenery (and art direction) of her mountaintop clinic can be a distraction, Craig's smooth throwaway as he focuses intently on her ("Really? I hadn't noticed") draws a laugh only he could get. Roger Moore would have arched an eyebrow, but Craig is funny because he doesn't wink at the

The mixed relay team dropped the baton. Again.



audience. He can also turn off the charm when it's time to throw someone through a window.

Skyfall, a knowing victory lap for the series, took Bond home to his grim childhood home but also — with Ralph Fiennes as a new M and Naomie Harris at Miss Moneypenny's desk — to the sitcom-like status quo circa *Dr. No*. *Spectre* plays by established rules rather than break or radically overhaul them, and frankly gets a little baggy between set-pieces. A ludicrous backstory that links Bond's unhappy childhood with the villain's scheme feels contrived — as if subverting democracy worldwide and massive terrorist attacks weren't evil enough to annoy the hero into fighting. *Skyfall* had genuine surprises, but this reverts to the expected — the one 'reveal' is too close to a trick played last time to fool you again.

Other elements are rote: the tentacular title sequence is cool but the song is a dud; Dave Bautista's Oddjob-like silent, smirking thug is formidable in a *From Russia With Love* fight-on-a-train but otherwise a formula goon; Léa Seydoux works wonders with thin material as one of the more passive Bond girls (her job is to be imperilled and rescued), and Monica Bellucci is in and out with little chance to show her fire. A couple of the car chases — through weirdly depopulated nighttime cities — are oddly frictionless, and the one major gadget turns out to be a get-out-of-certain-death-free card on a par with the invisible car and the hover-gondola.

However, although *Spectre* is less satisfying overall than *Skyfall*, some sequences rank with Bond's best. The pre-credits set-piece, with a skull-masked Bond in Mexico City during the Day Of The Dead opens with a *Touch Of Evil* long tracking shot that's a stunner (Daniel Craig just walking briskly across precarious rooftops with style is a thrilling spectacle), and delivers a definitive struggle-inside-an-out-of-control-helicopter climax most films would save for a finale. After such things have been out of fashion for a while, it's great to see SPECTRE back in business — with a crowded evil business meeting in Rome and a spectacular evil desert lair on Tunisia, inhabited by a mercurially nasty, whimsical, overconfident chairman (Christoph Waltz) who wipes away the taint of Dr. Evil and matches the amusing menace of Donald Pleasence or Gert Fröbe.

Craig had a less tough job at the start than Fiennes does here, taking over from the most-beloved M in the series (Judi Dench) and entering the superspy arena without reminding you that he was in the Avengers film we don't talk about. M gets his own subplot, clashing with a slick new spymaster (Andrew Scott) whose wrong'un status is affirmed when it's mentioned he was "at school with the Home Secretary". Ben Whishaw's Q is also a gem, reminding Bond that some civil servants have mortgages and cats to look after while he's rushing around the world having high adventures. Harris, however, has a better role in the tie-in mobile phone ad than this film, reinforcing the sense that this is one for the boys rather than a crossover like *Casino Royale* or *Skyfall*. **KIM NEWMAN**

VERDICT If this is to be Craig's last bow as 007, he'll be remembered for bringing Ian Fleming's grit back to one of the great British film franchises. Kudos to Mendes, Craig, Waltz, Fiennes and the location-finder. But could we please get a hummable song next time.



The Good Dinosaur

★★★☆☆

OUT **DECEMBER 26** / RATED **PG** / **100 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Peter Sohn
CAST (VOICES) Raymond Ochoa, Frances McDormand, Jeffrey Wright, Sam Elliott

PLOT A young dinosaur gets lost in the forest and has to find his way home with nobody for company but a dog-like boy.

FROM THE STUNNING OPENING shot here of water babbling over pebbles, it's clear that Pixar's technical animation skills are unbeatable — which is just as well, since the blobby cartoon dinosaurs who live in this idyll don't seem quite up to their standard. This is a lesser effort from the studio, a sweet, funny, very straightforward adventure with a lot of heart but none of the sophistication of, say, *Inside Out*.

The set-up is slightly confused — perhaps thanks to a tumultuous and rushed production after an 11th hour rethink. In this world the dinosaurs were never wiped out and have evolved over millions of years, though there's little exploration of that idea. We hone in on a family of Apatosauruses who have become farmers. That's about the full extent of their progress. Given the millions of years that have passed it seems a touch… unproductive. They talk, of course, but what cartoon animals don't? Into this Apatosaurus family are born three kids, two boisterous and strong, one tiny and cowardly. The latter, Arlo (Raymond Ochoa), fears everything but wants to be brave. His dad tasks him with killing a "critter" that keeps eating their crops, but he wimps out. Letting the creature live causes a series of knock-on events that eventually see him lost, miles from home. His only companion on the journey home is that critter, Spot (Jack Bright), a human who has evolved to become basically a Labrador.

The story is very A-to-B with little time for sub-plots or supporting characters, aside from some interesting cowboy T-Rexes and a strange, trippy hermit. Though the journey feels underdeveloped, director Peter Sohn has got the most important thing right: the relationship between Arlo and Spot. Their bond rings touchingly true, always. If a lot of *The Good Dinosaur* shows the marks of a rushed production — though not the landscape and environment design, which is gorgeous — its central pair have enough heart to make the film's shortcomings fade away.

OLLY RICHARDS

VERDICT Given the work lavished on every detail of the glorious backdrop, it's a pity that the story happening in front of it is so familiar and safe.



Above: Arlo (Raymond Ochoa) meets the trippy Forrest Woodbush (Peter Sohn).
Below: Arlo and Spot (Jack Bright) fall in with some T-rexes.



In The Heart Of The Sea

★★★☆☆

OUT **NOW** / RATING **M** / **121 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Ron Howard

CAST Chris Hemsworth, Cillian Murphy, Benjamin Walker

This rollicking tale of survival by the crew of the *Essex* – a Boston whaling vessel sunk by a gargantuan bull sperm whale in the early 19th century (and the inspiration for Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*) – is not one of Ron Howard's best, thanks to some ersatz CGI and an uneven tone. And the ostensibly no-brainer casting of Chris Hemsworth as salty hero Owen Chase is something of a backfire, as he channels 1960s matinee idol Stephen Boyd in a mondo-macho performance. But, rollick it doth, with tension, thrills and moments of real horror as the whale pursues the longboat-bound survivors. Some clanging lines in the main action and the framing story, where *Essex* survivor Brendan Gleeson relates the tale to Ben Whishaw's Melville, undermine the primal dangers. John Huston's *Moby Dick* remains the benchmark. **DANIEL MURPHY**



By The Sea

★★★☆☆

OUT **NOW** / RATING **MA15+** / **122 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Angelina Jolie Pitt

CAST Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie Pitt, Mélanie Laurent

Swap the sizzling chemistry of *Mr & Mrs Smith* with a stifling discord and it's quite staggering the difference 10 years makes. In the Jolie-Pitt's second collaboration they play very chic, desperately unhappy married Americans on an idyllic seaside French sojourn in the '70s. Drowning out an unspoken trauma, Nessa (Jolie Pitt) pill pops and Roland (Pitt) drinks, but a hole in their hotel room that allows them to watch their amorous newlywed neighbours (Laurent and Melvil Poupaud) may be a rejuvenator for their relationship. Not nearly as untenable as it sounds, Jolie Pitt directs a languid homage to vintage European cinema that drips with style even if that – and the celebrity glow of Brangelina, who shot the feature on their honeymoon – can be a recurring distraction. **JIM MITCHELL**

DID YOU KNOW?

The first film where Angelina Jolie is credited as 'Jolie Pitt', after marrying the Bradster on August 23, 2014 in France.



Love The Coopers

★★☆☆☆

OUT **NOW** / RATING **PG** / **107 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Jessie Nelson

CAST Diane Keaton, John Goodman, Ed Helms, Amanda Seyfried

Whether trilling carols or hosting their brood of grown-up children, the Coopers (Diane Keaton and John Goodman) love Christmas. But do they still love each other? It's hard to care when so many starry subplots are whizzing around them. While one daughter (Marisa Tomei) is getting done for shoplifting, another (Olivia Wilde) is flirting with a soldier (Jake Lacy) at the airport. Meanwhile everyone with a Y chromosome is hankering after a waitress (Amanda Seyfried). Despite her limited screen time and irreverent character, Wilde manages to be charming, but her co-stars' characters are thinner than gingerbread men. A cloying narration humiliates all concerned and there's too much going on and too little character development for this to become a Christmas classic. **ANNA SMITH**



Youth

★★★★☆

OUT **DECEMBER 26** / RATED **TBC** / **118 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Paolo Sorrentino

CAST Michael Caine, Harvey Keitel, Rachel Weisz, Paul Dano, Jane Fonda

Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel reveal themselves to be a brilliant double act in Paolo Sorrentino's (*The Great Beauty*) *Youth*, a poetic and intermittently surreal meditation on life, memory and ageing. Like life itself, it's a collection of loosely linked moments that traverse comedy, tragedy and everything in between as retired music conductor Fred (Caine) and film director pal Mick (Keitel) spend time at the world's weirdest hotel in the breathtaking Swiss Alps. It's a gorgeously shot philosophical feast with much to chew on, the artier pretensions leavened by moments of bluntness and humour (see Mick and Fred's updates on weeing). At times rudderless, it's still an affecting rumination on life in all its profound, absurd glory. **JAMES JENNINGS**

DID YOU KNOW?

Playing themselves in the film are singers Paloma Faith, Mark Kozelek (Sun Kil Moon) and lyric coloratura soprano Sumi Jo.

DID YOU KNOW?

The voices of Snoopy and Woodstock are from archive footage of the late Bill Melendez, who had voiced them since the '60s.





Snoopy And Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie

★★★☆☆

OUT **JANUARY 1** / RATED **G** / **93 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Steve Martino **CAST (VOICES)** Noah Schnapp, Hadley Belle Miller, Alexander Garfin

Carp about studio exploitation all you like, but director Martino and his animators have paid due diligence to beloved "blockhead" Charlie Brown – an American hero more Woody Allen than Shrek, felled by "a serious case of inadequacy" and the mischief of classmate Lucy and canine Snoopy (*Peanuts*' Tyler Durden). Devotees will appreciate the faithful detail, how the lush 3D animation exactingly reproduces Charles Schulz's 2D artwork. As Schulz worked in three-panel strips, so the plot is an assembly of witty skits depicting Brown's personal hell when a new girl arrives to melt his heart and social standing. To add some Pixar-pep, we get Snoopy's loop-the-loop daydreams, dogfighting his nemesis, the Red Baron. It's slight, but sweet. **IN**



The Bélier Family

★★★☆☆

OUT **DECEMBER 26** / RATED **M** / **106 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Eric Lartigau

CAST Karin Viard, François Damiens, Louane Emera

A crowd-pleasing hit in its native France, *The Bélier Family* is built on a high, probably Hollywood-bound concept: talented teen country girl Paula (Emera) dreams of becoming a big-time singer, the twist being that she is the only hearing member of a deaf farming family. It's broad, predictable, surprisingly bawdy for a family-friendly comedy (Paula has to explain her parents' sex life to a gynaecologist) and borderline insensitive (Dad wants to run for mayor with the slogan "I hear ya!"). For all that, it emerges as good-hearted. Viard and Damiens make likable parents but the César-winning Emera, a semi-finalist on France's *The Voice*, adds a touching centre as the awkward teen who grows in stature. It's a hard heart that doesn't melt when Paula figures out how to share her gift with her family. **IAN FREER**

DID YOU KNOW?

Nicole Kidman received an email from Julia Roberts asking "Will you do this with me?" after Roberts hand-picked Kidman to be her co-star.



Secret In Their Eyes

★★★☆☆

OUT **NOW** / RATING **M** / **111 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Billy Ray

CAST Chiwetel Ejiofor, Nicole Kidman,Julia Roberts

Falling into the "remakes that didn't need to be made" basket, Billy Ray's *Secret In Their Eyes* is proof that throwing a big name cast (Chiwetel Ejiofor, Nicole Kidman and Julia Roberts) into the thriller mix isn't a big enough point of difference. There are tweaks to the Argentinian Best Foreign Film Oscar winner's twisting plot that work, especially the decision to bring the horrific crime that kickstarts events much closer to home for the protagonists, but the story of three investigators and how their lives are forever changed by a brutal murder lacks the intensity and political turmoil of the superior original. The shock denouement is still as unsettling as ever and Ejiofor commands every scene he is in, it's just a shame it's all been done better before. **DAVID MICHAEL BROWN**



Hotel Transylvania 2

★★★☆☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **PG** / **89 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Genndy Tartakovsky

CAST Adam Sandler, Andy Samberg, Selena Gomez, Steve Buscemi, David Spade, Kevin James

The Drac pack return for another coffin-load of family friendly funnies as Adam Sandler and chums de-fang Dracula and the classic Universal Monsters, you know, for kids. Ironically, where the *Happy Gilmore* star's live-action efforts have become ever more puerile and juvenile, much to his fans' chagrin, the films he has made for his younger viewers are showing signs of maturity. Just. With voices provided by usual Sandler cohorts (Steve Buscemi, Kevin James, David Spade et al.) and an over-riding message of acceptance as the bloodsucker tries to ensure his half-vampire, half-human grandson grows fangs, the second visit to Hotel Transylvania is full of genuine belly laughs. Mainly thanks to a blob of jelly. **DMB**



Carey Mulligan's Maud feels the long arm of the law.

Suffragette

★★★★☆

OUT **DECEMBER 26** / RATED **M** / **106 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Sarah Gavron
CAST Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter, Brendan Gleeson, Anne-Marie Duff, Ben Whishaw, Romola Garai, Meryl Streep

PLOT In 1912, laundress Maud Watts (Mulligan) is fearful of the militant suffragettes urging her to join them. But a lifetime's abuse and humiliation eventually drive her to act, in hope of a better future.

***SUFFRAGETTE* BLOWS THE DUST** off history in an involving, women-driven drama with a political thriller element and thought-provoking contemporary relevance for men and women equally. Somehow 'suffragettes' — originally a twee term for suffragists, coined in derision by a *Daily Mail* journalist and gleefully embraced by the women's movement — have acquired a quaint image as shrill ladies in bloomers who chained themselves to railings. People have forgotten British women were beaten, tortured and died to win the right to vote that too many now neglect to exercise.

Screenwriter Abi Morgan cleverly sidesteps the leaders of the movement — largely privileged, educated women frustrated by social and economic inequities — and focuses on the foot soldier, a working woman, wife and mother. Carey Mulligan's touching Maud has spent her life toiling in a grim laundry. Marriage to Sonny (Ben Whishaw) has given her tenuous security and a cherished child. Life is about working hard and knowing her place. But Maud's curiosity is piqued by an activist co-worker (Anne-Marie Duff) and the rebellious wife (Romola Garai) of an antipathetic politician (Samuel West). Clandestine meetings with a local militant (Helena Bonham Carter) are monitored by the Man From The Met (Brendan Gleeson) and Maud is dangerously committed to an underground cell, an illegal course of action and a horrific ordeal.

Aptly, iconic Meryl Streep cameos as charismatic Emmeline Pankhurst, emerging from hiding to incite her admiring troops to rebellion. But even in this scene it is Mulligan's radiant face that gets to the heart of the matter, despair ignited into hope and aspiration.

Director Sarah Gavron is impressively capable with both the character drama and big, tense set-pieces like the violently disrupted demonstrations, the militants' "terrorist" acts and the climactic Epsom Derby, where a fateful statement marks a landmark moment in the movement. But what strikes one most forcibly is how grievances, indignities and the desperate desire to be heard must eventually be addressed by a society. **ANGIE ERRIGO**

VERDICT A wonderfully involving, moving Carey Mulligan and the spirited ensemble around her flesh out a handsomely crafted, timely look at why and how far people are willing to go for a cause.



Mississippi Grind

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** / **109 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck
CAST Ryan Reynolds, Ben Mendelsohn, Sienna Miller

It's an inspired meet-cute when Gerry (Mendelsohn), a soft-eyed realtor with money issues, encounters charismatic chancer Curtis (Reynolds) at a poker table. Winning big, Gerry asks his new lucky charm to help play his way down the Mississippi to a big New Orleans buy-in game; but the further they get, the more we see what they've already lost. Minus the gloss of *21* and *Ocean's Eleven*, Fleck and Boden (*Sugar*, *Half Nelson*) make the stakes feel higher, more brutal. And while it's a bit of a slow burner, Mendelsohn is so compelling, there's really no need for things to speed up. **KP**



Phoenix

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** / **94 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Christian Petzold
CAST Nina Hoss, Ronald Zehrfeld, Nina Kunzendorf

Nelly Lenz (Hoss) survives the concentration camps, her surgically reconstructed face a reminder of Nazi brutally. Returning to Berlin, she finds her husband who fails to recognise her. Is this her opportunity to discover whether it was he who betrayed her to the Nazis? Notwithstanding Christian Petzold's mastery of mood and setting, it's the subtle potency of Nina Hoss's beguiling performance that persuades the audience to accept a melodramatic contrivance in this gripping study of treachery, identity and survival in post-War Berlin. **DP**



2015 Review of the year

The stories, people and trends that made 2015 (dino)soar...

Park Life

How Jurassic World became the year's biggest film

A FEW MONTHS AGO, somewhere around the middle of June, Frank Marshall arrived at the Chateau Marmont hotel in Los Angeles. He was there to meet, among others, Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Colin Trevorrow and Donna Langley, head of Universal Pictures. Glasses were raised and, at one point, some guy called Steven Spielberg phoned in from the East Coast. "We all toasted together," smiles Marshall. "It was very nice."

The get-together marked the phenomenal success of a little movie they'd all worked on – *Jurassic World*, the movie that, with over $1.6 billion in the bank, was not just comfortably the year's biggest hit, but the third-biggest of all time. Most notably, its opening weekend of $208 million beat the record set by Joss Whedon's *The Avengers* in 2012. And it's fair to say nobody saw it coming, not least its producers, Spielberg and Marshall. "The studio was telling us that we were going to be somewhere between $100 and 110 million on the opening weekend," says Marshall. "But then it seemed that every hour the number would go up. I think it was a perfect storm of a release."

When the opening-weekend record fell, Marvel Studios boss Kevin Feige commissioned a cartoon commemorating the achievement, upholding a long and



Gray (Ty Simpkins) and Zach (Nick Robinson) drive around Jurassic World in the gyrosphere they bought with the film's profits.

noble tradition (started by Spielberg, when *Star Wars* beat *Jaws*' opening-weekend record) where the deposed box-office champ salutes the new incumbent. In it, the Avengers are confronted by a T-rex holding Thor's hammer. "That was fantastic," says Marshall. "I have it in my office. I think I should probably be preparing one to have a dinosaur with a Death Star in its mouth, or something, because I think we are going to be passing the baton soon."

Ah, yes. *The Force Awakens*, produced by Marshall's wife, Kathleen Kennedy, has yet to open, and could well blow past *Jurassic World*. Have the most powerful couple in Hollywood been making wagers around the breakfast table? "No," he laughs. "We don't think that way. But I had to set the bar high for her. I didn't want to just waltz into the weekend. I don't wanna jinx anything, but they've got a really good shot at it."

Jurassic World outperformed the other anticipated big gun of 2015 – *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* – and the producer believes that, 14 years after the underperforming *Jurassic Park III*, the time was right for a movie like *Jurassic World* to thrive in a marketplace dominated by comic book movies. "I think it was kind of refreshing," he says. "Because dinosaurs are not superheroes. I think people were ready for that and they were excited by that. And, you know, people think dinosaurs are cool." ›

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!

Cameos Of The Year...

01 HUGH JACKMAN

Me And Earl And The Dying Girl

When director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon needed a Wolverine poster to start speaking to his heroine (Olivia Cooke), he went straight to the man who's wielded the claws since 2000. As it was a fantasy sequence, Jackman decided to use his own Aussie accent.

02 DAVID BECKHAM

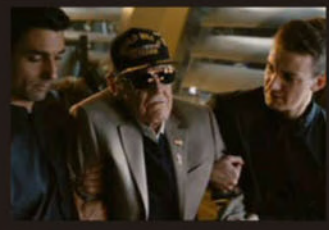
The Man From U.N.C.L.E.

Yes, that was Goldenballs, making his debut as a KGB projectionist for his friend, Guy Ritchie. He even has a line. In Russian. And you thought he could only take free kicks and do his hair.

03 JIMMY BUFFETT

Jurassic World

As a man trying to shield his cocktails from a flying dino attack, the US singer has already inspired countless cosplay pics. Not bad for four seconds of screen time.



04 STAN LEE

Avengers: Age Of Ultron

Stan The Man was always going to be on this list. His Ant-Man cameo (see page 101) is fine, but his appearance in the Avengers sequel, where he drunkenly slurs his catchphrase, "Excelsior!", is our favourite. 'Nuff said, true believers.

05 OLIVIA WILLIAMS

Man Up

Williams drops into the Simon Pegg comedy as Pegg's ex-wife, managing to get bigger laughs with a withering look than a dozen screenplays crammed with dialogue.

Spies vs. Spies

2015's best, compared and contrasted



	Spectre	Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation	Spy	Kingsman: The Secret Service	The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
WHAT'S THE PLOT?	MI6 is targeted by a nefarious organisation known only as SPECTRE. Only James Bond can stop them.	The IMF is targeted by a nefarious organisation known only as the Syndicate. Only Ethan Hunt can stop them.	Arms dealer Rayna Boyanov is selling a nuke to the highest bidder. Only desk-bound CIA whizz Susan Cooper can stop her.	Mega-rich madman Richmond Valentine plans to kill 90 per cent of life on Earth and start afresh. Only the Kingsmen, plus a scruffy chav, can stop him.	In the 1960s, a wealthy Nazi couple plan to detonate a nuke. Only the CIA's Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin of the KGB can stop them.
IS THE HERO A SUAVE MAN IN A TUX?	A Tom Ford ivory tux, no less, which is treated very badly indeed before being removed to facilitate sexy time.	Not so much a tux guy (except when in disguise at a lavish party), though Hunt certainly scrubs up in a blue suit and burgundy shirt.	No. Instead, Susan is dressed "like Santa Claus's fucking wife".	Colin Firth's Harry Hart certainly is. Taron Egerton's Eggsy, however, is more of a Puffa jacket-and-trainers kinda guy.	Solo is expensively tailored to within an inch of his life, while Kuryakin goes for an earthier Cold War chic.
ARE THERE ANY ACRONYMOUS AGENCIES?	Titular (sort of) bad guys SPECTRE, plus MI5 and MI6 are combining to make CNS (Centre for National Security).	The IMF, CIA and MI6 all get a look in. Thankfully, the Syndicate is not an acronym. We'd be here all day.	Just the CIA. WTF?	N.O.P.E.	CIA plus KGB spells U.N.C.L.E. Well, it spells CIAKGB, but that's not quite as catchy.
GADGETS?	007's (well, 009's) Aston Martin comes with flamethrower, rear guns, ejector seat and Sinatra songs as standard. Bond also has an exploding watch.	Oodles. Fingerprint-operated car locks, smart specs, 3D face-mask printers, digital keys... The IMF is like the ultimate branch of Dick Smith.	A dart-firing rape whistle, anti-fungal spray to disable security systems, anti-poison laxatives and haemorrhoid wipes. It's a glamorous life.	A Q Branch's worth: bulletproof suits and umbrella guns, electrified rings, augmented reality specs, poison pens, knifey shoes and more.	This is the Cold War, so there are bugs and bug-scanners galore. Kuryakin carries gamma radiation-sensitive film and a CO_2 laser in his pocket.
DOES ANYONE USE A CODE NAME OR COVER?	Bond, being the worst spy in the history of spying, goes by the cunning *nom de plume* 'James Bond'.	Ethan briefly goes by the designation 'Bravo Echo 1-1'. For fans of THX-based Easter eggs, BE11 is a mirror image of 1138.	Cooper travels under various aliases, including Carol Jenkins, Penny Morgan and the improbably porny Amber Valentine.	Arthur, Lancelot, Galahad, Merlin: the Kingsmen name themselves after the cast of *Spamalot*. Or the Knights Of The Round Table, one of the two.	Solo travels as an antiquities dealer, Kuryakin as an architect. Neither of them do any antiquities dealing or architecting.
ARE THERE EXOTIC LOCATIONS?	Rome, Austria, Morocco: Bond is basically just following Ethan Hunt around these days.	Belarus, Cuba, Malaysia and France, plus Austria and Morocco, the go-to destinations for spies in 2015.	Cooper takes a tour of Europe's glamorous capitals, hitting up Paris, Rome and Budapest.	So London-centric it's like it was filmed on one of those big red tour buses.	Limited to Italy, with Rome playing a big part alongside some gorgeous Amalfi Coast locales.
DOES THE BAD GUY LIVE?	Yes. In a rarity for Bond, Blofeld isn't killed, but is arrested instead. As he doesn't actually commit *that* many crimes, he should be out soon.	Yes. Whispering Sean Harris's evil Solomon Lane is locked away in a glass box at the end. They might let him out for pee breaks.	Yes. Rose Byrne's Rayna is last seen being hauled away by cops, telling them not to "touch my fucking hair".	No. Valentine is skewered on his own sidekick's leg, and then projectile vomits at the sight of his own blood. It's how he would have wanted to go.	No. All the villains are thoroughly U.N.C.L.E.D.
WHO'S THE HENCHMAN?	None meatier than Dave Bautista's Mr. Hinx, the man with the silvery thumbnails.	Janik 'Bone Doctor' Vinter is a nasty piece of work, but then, with a nickname like Bone Doctor he was never going to do kids' parties.	Rayna employs plenty of anonymous and disposable goons, but no standout henchman.	Henchwoman, actually: Valentine's pal Gazelle has razor-sharp blades for legs, and isn't afraid to cut you in half with them.	Just a pet torturer, Uncle Rudi.



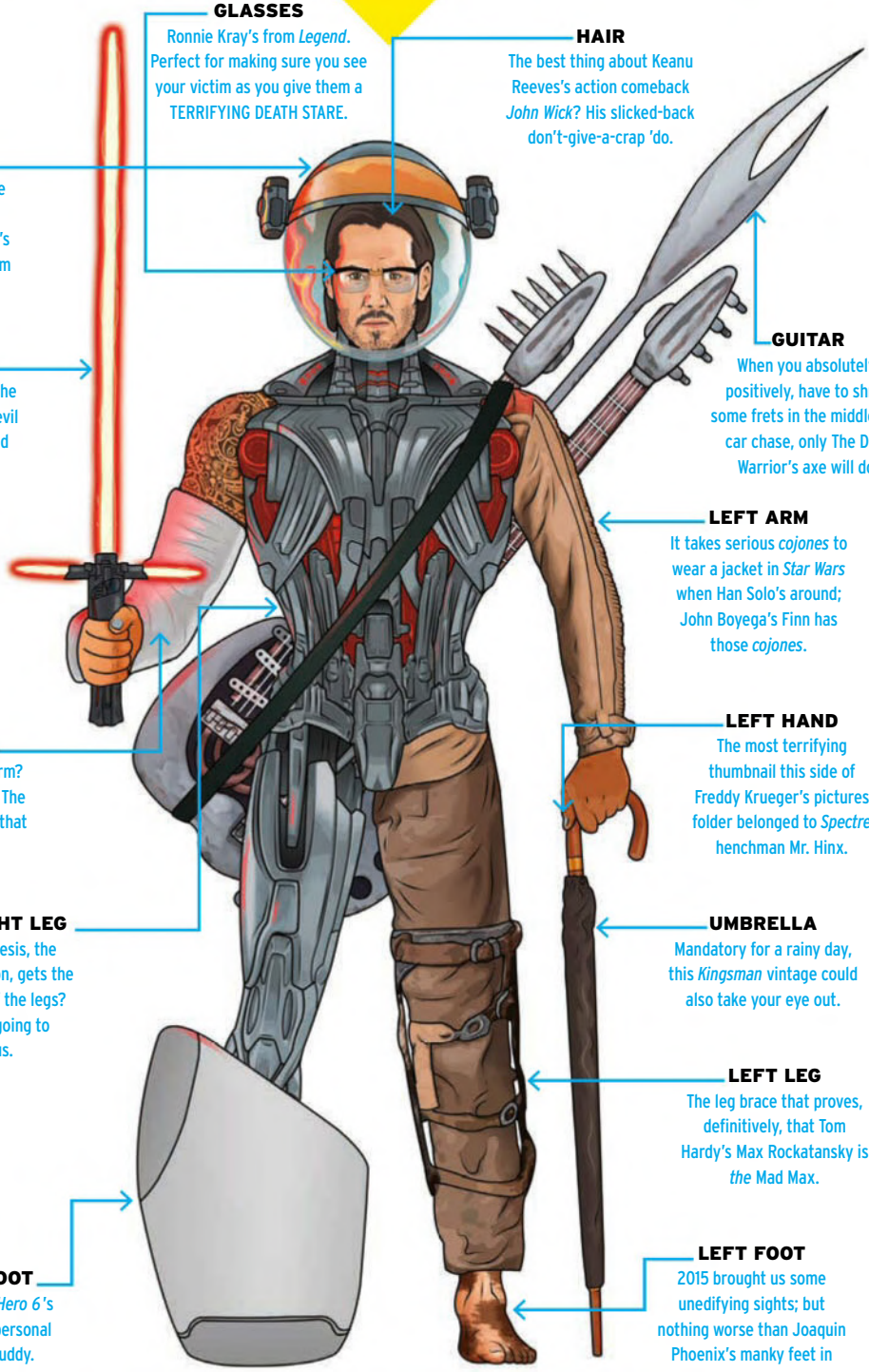
Trend Of The Year
CUTTLEFISH

Yes, cuttlefish. They were constantly mentioned in movies this year, so much so you could have been forgiven for thinking that seafood chef Rick Stein had been moonlighting as a screenwriter. In *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, Andy Serkis's Ulysses Klaw mentions how they use 'disco lights' to distract their prey. "It's not really disco lights," says Nicholas Gladman, of the University Of Leeds' School Of Biology. "But they can do that." In *Me And Earl And The Dying Girl*, Nick Offerman mentions fried cuttlefish, while in *Jurassic World*, their DNA is used to explain away the Indominus Rex's camouflage ability. "They can alter their colouration using their visual system," explains Gladman. "But cuttlefish are molluscs, so they're very far away from vertebrates like dinosaurs. I'm not sure it'd work for real..."

Man Of The Year

Made of component parts from 2015's greatest male characters

ILLUSTRATION **BILL McCONKEY**



GLASSES
Ronnie Kray's from *Legend*. Perfect for making sure you see your victim as you give them a TERRIFYING DEATH STARE.

HAIR
The best thing about Keanu Reeves's action comeback *John Wick*? His slicked-back don't-give-a-crap 'do.

HELMET
Sorry, Ant-Man. You have a lovely helmet, but we plumped for Matt Damon's fuller, thicker version from *The Martian*.

LIGHTSABER
Kylo Ren's broadsaber is the must-have accessory for evil tyrants this summer. Mind the fingers, though.

GUITAR
When you absolutely, positively, have to shred some frets in the middle of a car chase, only The Doof Warrior's axe will do.

LEFT ARM
It takes serious *cojones* to wear a jacket in *Star Wars* when Han Solo's around; John Boyega's Finn has those *cojones*.

RIGHT ARM
Have you broken your arm? Is it in plaster? If you're The Rock in *Fast & Furious 7*, that won't matter a jot.

LEFT HAND
The most terrifying thumbnail this side of Freddy Krueger's pictures folder belonged to *Spectre* henchman Mr. Hinx.

TORSO/RIGHT LEG
Iron Man's nemesis, the unstoppable Ultron, gets the chest *and* one of the legs? Tony Stark is going to be furious.

UMBRELLA
Mandatory for a rainy day, this *Kingsman* vintage could also take your eye out.

LEFT LEG
The leg brace that proves, definitively, that Tom Hardy's Max Rockatansky is *the* Mad Max.

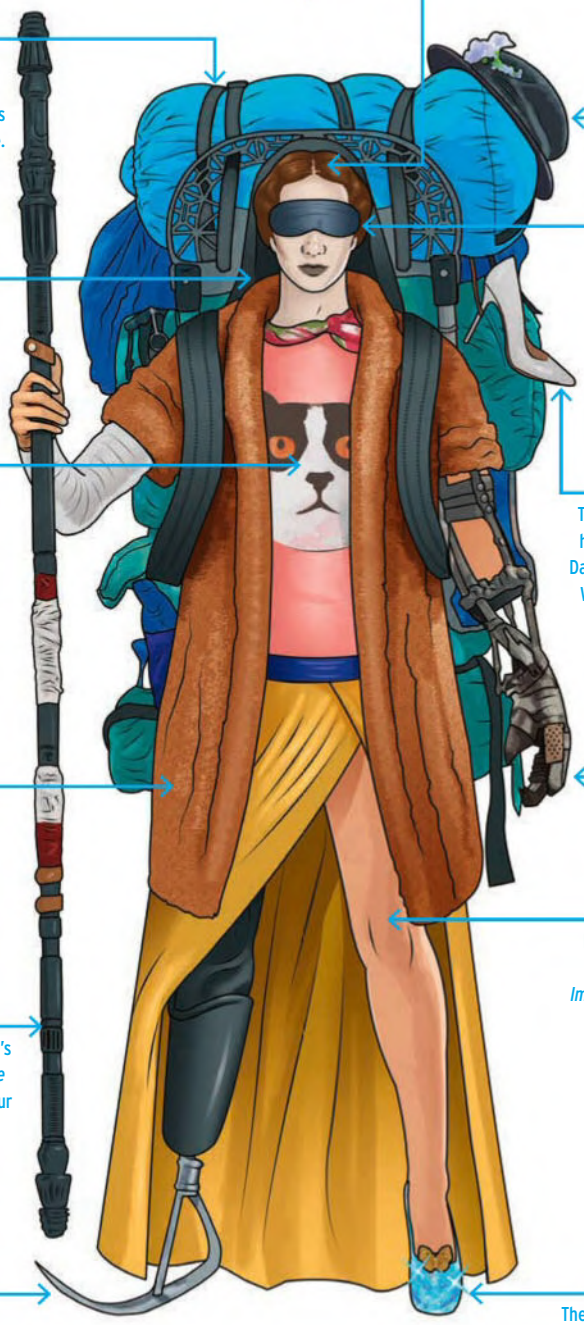
RIGHT FOOT
Belongs to *Big Hero 6*'s Baymax, your personal healthcare buddy. Puncture-repair kit included.

LEFT FOOT
2015 brought us some unedifying sights; but nothing worse than Joaquin Phoenix's manky feet in *Inherent Vice*.

Woman Of The Year

Pieced together from our favourite screen ladies

ILLUSTRATION **BILL McCONKEY**



HAIR
The long, lustrous locks of Lady Lucille Sharpe from *Crimson Peak*. When she lets it all down, watch out: psycho mode.

HAT
The broad-brimmed specimen sported by Carey Mulligan in *Suffragette* – not the hat of a social climber but a radical.

BLINDFOLD
Perfect bedwear. You can either go kinky, like Dakota Johnson in *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, or go straight to sleep. Versatile.

SHOES
The year's most controversial high heels belonged to Bryce Dallas Howard in *Jurassic World*. We've taken them off for her.

LEFT ARM
Furiosa's prosthetic arm from *Mad Max: Fury Road*. George Miller wanted it to be the left as it would rarely be on camera, and thus less expensive.

LEFT LEG
Dress of the year belonged to Rebecca Ferguson in *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*. Great for the opera, and leaping on baddies to snap their necks.

LEFT FOOT
The glass slipper (terribly unhygienic at best; downright dangerous at worst) that fits only one foot: Cinderella's.

RIGHT FOOT
The bladed prosthetic of Gazelle in *Kingsman: The Secret Service*. Rosa Klebb's got serious shoe envy right now.

STAFF
As wielded by Daisy Ridley's Rey in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. You could put your eye out with that thing.

COAT
Cate Blanchett's extraordinary coat in *Carol*. Yes, it's fur, but it was the '50s; they were untutored times.

JUMPER
Worn (reluctantly) by Melissa McCarthy in *Spy*, this could be quite the conversation-starter. At speed-dating nights.

BURKA
As worn by Sheila Vand's Iranian vampire, The Girl. Just about perfect for walking home alone at night.

BACKPACK
Take a page out of Reese Witherspoon's book from *Wild*, pack up your troubles in an old kit bag and smile. Then cry a lot.

The 2015 Cry-o-meter



ANT-MAN
Ant-Man's friendly flying companion is gunned down in the line of duty. We're not going to cry. It's an ant, for God's sake.



JOHN WICK
Russian gangsters shoot John Wick's achingly cute Beagle puppy, Daisy, in the head. We'll be honest, it's a lip-wobbler.



BROOKLYN
Homesick Saoirse Ronan gets on the phone to her distraught mother, back in Ireland, after a family member dies. No, *you've* got something in your eye.



FAST & FURIOUS 7
Dominic Toretto says goodbye to Brian O'Conner, and we say goodbye to Paul Walker. A heartbreaking tribute.



INSIDE OUT
Bing Bong, the imaginary friend, learns to let go of Riley, and disappears into a spectral realm from which there is no escape. Absolute floods.



Deaths Of The Year

They died, so we could point and laugh at their misfortune



01 ZARA *JURASSIC WORLD*

Katie McGrath has corpsed more times than she can count. "I've pretty much died in everything I'm in," she laughs. "In *Dracula* I got bitten in a bath by Jonathan Rhys Meyers, who then spat blood into my face. And I died every year in *Merlin*. It must be my face!" But while McGrath is used to flatlining for the camera, nothing could prepare her for her showstopping demise in *Jurassic World*. As self-involved personal assistant Zara, she's picked up by a flying pterosaur and dropped in a lagoon – and just when you think it's safe to go back into the water, along comes aquatic heffalump the mosasaurus. Game over.

"The director Colin [*Trevorrow*] offered me the job by saying, 'Listen, this is going to be a big deal. This death is epic,'" recalls the Irish actress, who becomes the first woman to bite the dino-dust in a *Jurassic Park* movie. "I was like, 'Whatever.' Cut to the shoot and I'm in an abandoned car park in New Orleans, hanging upside down off a crane, about to be dropped 11 storeys. The only thing I really freaked out about was when they asked me to open my eyes underwater. They said, 'Are you kidding? That's what you're having a moment about?'"

There's an argument that Zara perhaps didn't deserve such a savage and protracted death for the heinous crime of not being a particularly observant personal assistant. For her part, McGrath is delighted to have been bumped off in such a memorable manner. "The best part is how many people called me or texted me, who I hadn't heard from in years, saying, 'I just saw you being gobbled by a dinosaur!' I had a much bigger impact in the movie than I expected, given I'm only in it for a few minutes. And my mum is ecstatic that you guys have given me Death Of The Year. She just loves that I've won *something*."



02 QUICKSILVER

AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

"You didn't see that coming," pants Aaron Taylor-Johnson's super-speedy superhero after he's riddled with bullets. And he's right – we didn't, mainly because Joss Whedon had been heavily telegraphing the death of Hawkeye instead. Characters who die in Marvel movies have a habit of coming back. How long can Quicksilver stay snuffed?



03 MORRIS

BIG GAME

The hilarious high point of Jalmari Helander's middling Amblin-lite caper comes when Ray Stevenson's baddy is hit in the chest by an arrow. Luckily for him, it doesn't have the momentum to break the skin, bouncing off instead. Unluckily for him, it stops his pacemaker and triggers a mid-air heart attack. It's a shame about Ray.



04 KIM JONG-UN

THE INTERVIEW

When we thought Seth Rogen comedy *The Interview* might trigger World War III, this was the shot causing all the trouble: when real-life North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un is blown up by a rocket. Hacked Sony emails reveal much talk of FX covering up Jong-un's exploding head with flame. The end result, soundtracked by a cover of Katy Perry's *Firework*, is rather lovely. We bet Jong-un's a big fan. ›



Sean Bean Lives!

Sean Bean survived every film he was in this year, bucking one of the grandest traditions in movies. So we asked, what if...?

Jupiter Ascending

As the stoic half-man, half-bee Stinger Apini, Bean's catchphrase is, "Bees don't lie." Or die, as it turns out.

THE ALTERNATIVE: In a shock move, all the bees in the world fly up Stinger's backside, and sting him into the middle of next week. This is what's known as a Jupiter ass ending. Sorry, Sean.

Pixels

As SAS officer Corporal Hill, Bean shows up for a strange but brief cameo, doesn't die, and then buggers off. Having not died.

THE ALTERNATIVE: He's bitten by Pac-Man, turned into a computer programme, uploaded to Netflix and spends eternity trapped in a series of Adam Sandler movies. Bad luck, Beany.

The Martian

As NASA bigwig Mitch Henderson, Bean is stoic in the face of overwhelming odds, solves a galactic crisis, and at no point gets squashed by Matt Damon's spaceship as it returns to Earth. Huh.

THE ALTERNATIVE: He gets crushed by Matt Damon's spaceship as it returns to Earth. Ouch.

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!

The 50 films to see in 2015 and why...



Amy ❍
Senna director Asif Kapadia works similar magic on this look at the tragic life of the late, great Amy Winehouse.



Ant-Man ❍
Marvel's smallest film yet survived the loss of Edgar Wright to deliver a fun, fresh spin on the heist movie.



Avengers: Age Of Ultron ❍
Joss Whedon's sequel didn't match the original but was a dark, weird beast that rewarded repeat viewings.



Birdman ❍
Alejandro G. Iñárritu's Oscar-winner was a stunningly cinematic study into the power of ego.



Black Mass ❍
And lo, Johneth of Depp stopped playing silly dress-ups (kinda) and decided to act again.



Bridge Of Spies ❍
Hanks and Spielberg reunite for this surefooted Cold War drama. The anti-Bond, if you will.



Creed ❍
Comeback king Rocky mentors Apollo Creed's son and a new contender for best *Rocky* sequel emerges.



Crimson Peak ❍
Guillermo del Toro's Gothic romance – not a horror – is a sumptuous, unsettling, deeply creepy thing.



Ex Machina ❍
Alex Garland strands inventors and android in a house. The result is icily intelligent and sexy sci-fi.



Fantastic Four ❍
Josh Trank's laborious flick failed to live up to its title. Even its own director dissed it in a swiftly deleted tweet.



Fast & Furious 7 ❍
Vin Diesel, The Rock and the late Paul Walker reunite for the biggest bout of nitrous oxide-powered hogwash yet.



Fifty Shades Of Grey ❍
Come for the Jamie Dornan/Dakota Johnson sex scenes, stay for the horrendous dialogue.



Foxcatcher ❍
Worth seeing for Channing Tatum's simmering turn as a wrestler. And Steve Carell? The nose plays.



The Gift ❍
Triple threat Joel Edgerton writes, directs and stars in a tense thriller that cleverly confounds expectations.



A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night ❍
If you see only one Iranian-American vampire spaghetti Western all year, see this one.



Girlhood ❍
Not a Richard Linklater sequel, but a beautifully frank French coming-of-age tale.



The Good Dinosaur ❍
After the wonderful *Inside Out*, the second Pixar movie of the year. Potentially the *great* dinosaur.



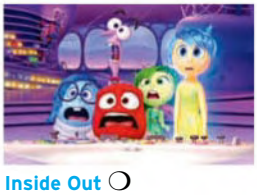
The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2 ❍
Katniss Everdeen takes her final bow. And you can pronounce that either way.



Holding The Man ❍
Timothy Conigrave's beloved book turns touching film with assist from Ryan Corr and Craig Stott as the leads.



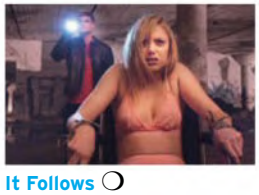
Inherent Vice ❍
Paul Thomas Anderson adapts Pynchon, and it's as mindbending as you'd expect. And much funnier.



Inside Out ❍
Pixar takes you inside the human mind, rips out your heart and does unspeakable things to your tear ducts.



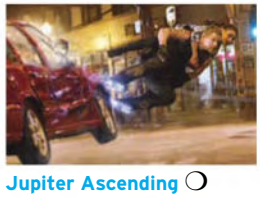
The Interview ❍
Seth Rogen and James Franco go to North Korea and nearly kill us all. Hard to see what the fuss was about.



It Follows ❍
David Robert Mitchell's dark, brooding horror does for rumpy-pumpy what *Jaws* did for water.



The Imitation Game ❍
Benedict Cumberbatch makes number crunching riveting in this real-life tale of WWII code cracking.



Jupiter Ascending ❍
The Wachowskis shoot for the moon, and miss by miles, in this demented sci-fi fantasy.

From blockbuster behemoths to indie marvels, with a few stinkers in-between, if you got through 2015 without seeing any of these, you're doing it wrong



Jurassic World ❍
The biggest film of the year (at the time of going to press). We think dinosaurs are in it.



Kingsman: The Secret Service ❍
Matthew Vaughn makes the Bond movie every 12-year-old boy would love to see.



Last Cab To Darwin ❍
Michael Caton delivers a career best performance as the pragmatic cabbie clocking his final fare.



Legend ❍
Tom Hardy and Tom Hardy are The Krays in Brian Helgeland's uneven but very entertaining crime tale.



Macbeth ❍
Shakespeare's Scottish Play becomes the Scottish Film, flecked in blood and dirt and grime.



Mad Max: Fury Road ❍
George Miller returns to the desert, and shows directors half his age how to make an action movie.



The Martian ❍
Matt Damon gets stranded on Mars and sciences the shit out of it in Ridley Scott's crowd-pleaser.



Me And Earl And The Dying Girl ❍
A wannabe filmmaker befriends a sick girl in this gorgeous and affecting story.



Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation ❍
Christopher McQuarrie's twisty-turner was perhaps the best *Mission* yet.



Mommy ❍
Xavier Dolan delivers again with this layered, funny, surprising look at a single mother's life.



A Most Violent Year ❍
J.C. Chandor's drama shies away from bloodshed but does have the best foot-chase since *Point Break*.



Paper Planes ❍
Aussie kid attends World Paper Plane Championships in Japan; feel-good warm 'n' fuzzies ensue.



A Pigeon Sat On A Branch Reflecting On Existence ❍
Roy Andersson's first film in seven years was boundlessly inventive, not least its title.



Selma ❍
Ava DuVernay's moving look at the Selma riots/marches. David Oyelowo excels as Martin Luther King.



Sicario ❍
The year's most gripping thriller, as Emily Blunt sinks into the murk of the unending war on drugs.



Spectre ❍
Bond is back, doing his Bondy things in his Bondy way. Could wind up as 007's biggest outing ever.



Spy ❍
Yes, another spy movie, and comfortably the funniest, as Melissa McCarthy finds her inner Jimmy Bond.



Star Wars: The Force Awakens ❍
We're not sure what this one's about. It might be the new Ken Loach.



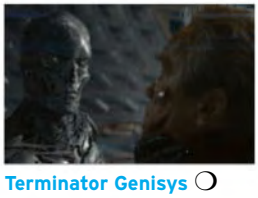
Still Alice ❍
The film that finally bagged Julianne Moore her overdue Oscar, as a woman suffering from early onset Alzheimer's.



Straight Outta Compton ❍
Everything you wanted to know about N.W.A but were afraid to ask (except why there isn't a dot after 'A').



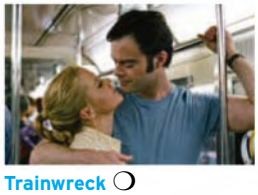
Suffragette ❍
Sarah Gavron assembles an all-star cast for this unflinching look at the fight to get women the vote.



Terminator Genisys ❍
Schwarzenegger returns as the T-800 in a confused farrago that may be the year's worst blockbuster.



The Theory Of Everything ❍
Eddie Redmayne *is* Stephen Hawking in James Marsh's fragile drama. Oscar ahoy!

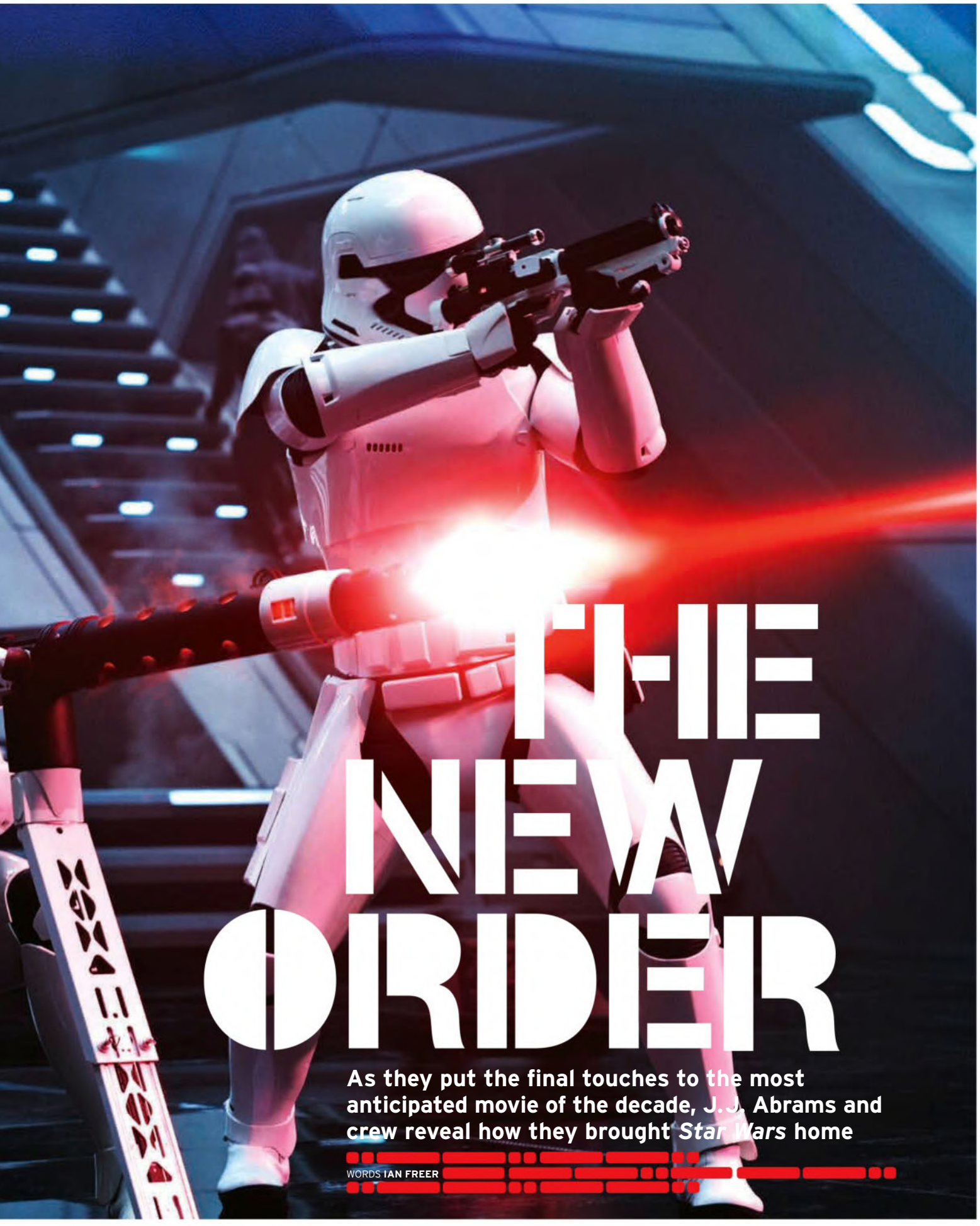


Trainwreck ❍
Judd Apatow and Amy Schumer deconstruct the romcom. Its heart is as sweet as its mouth is filthy.



Wyrmwood ❍
Inventive and gorily fun low-budget Aussie zombie film that squashes brains with the best of them.





THE NEW ORDER

As they put the final touches to the most anticipated movie of the decade, J.J. Abrams and crew reveal how they brought *Star Wars* home

WORDS **IAN FREER**



"WE HAD ONE FOR A LONG, LONG time," says J.J. Abrams about one of the most critical aspects of any *Star Wars* film: the opening crawl. "We're still playing with it now and I'm sure we will for another couple of weeks. I know we are going to be in amazing shape when that title appears. The question is not to lose that shape the second the crawl begins. Like every aspect of this movie, it's an important challenge."

Abrams has faced a Kessel Run of "important challenges" but they are coming to an end. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* has reached a landmark. It is 48 days (1,152 hours, 69,120 minutes) before it rolls out in practically every cinema in the world, and today is the day the picture gets "locked". With just a few visual effects shots to slot in, Abrams and editors Mary Jo Markey and Maryann Brandon are making no further changes. Today involves tweaking pre-dubs (sadly, not Reel 2 Dialogue 2) with *Star Wars* sound design legend Ben Burtt before a final mix, and then that's it. This is the film that the world has been eagerly waiting for since its announcement on October 30, 2012. Three years ago to the day.

Sitting in the sunshine outside the Howard Hawks dubbing stage on the 20th Century Fox lot — a reminder his film won't open with that famous fanfare — Abrams, dressed in the dark T-shirt, darker jeans and ever-present shades combo of an alt-rock bass player, is in a serious but bright mood. Ever since being wooed by Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy to carry on George Lucas's legacy, he has spent day and night figuring out what makes *Star Wars* indisputably *Star Wars* in 2015. And he seems relieved to be revealing the answer.

"It's impossible to have any real distance from it or objectivity," he says. "We are in a pretty healthy place. I am looking at things on a particularly technical, granular level. At this stage, I admire the purity of a kid who draws something and says, 'I'm done,' then just walks away. I am excited for the next stage."

BEFORE HE STARTED *The Force Awakens*, Abrams watched some movies. No, not those ones. Other ones. He looked at "the confidence" of John Ford Westerns. He took in the "unbelievable scene choreography and composition" of Kurosawa's *High And Low*. And he studied "the powerful stillness" of Terrence Malick. "It's not something I would normally have thought of coming to *Star Wars*," he says. The spare visual style of Ford, Kurosawa and Malick points to a key mandate for Abrams's approach to *Episode VII*: the distinctive less-is-more quality of the originals.

"I just remember leaving the theatre wanting to know more," says Bryan Burk, Abrams's producing partner at Bad Robot. "There were so many things hinted at that implied a much bigger world than you actually saw. Who is Jabba The Hutt? Where is Tosche Station? I love that experience of wanting to lean in and ask more."

Inspired by constant reference to J.W. Rinzler's essential *Making Of...* books, this pared-back M.O. also infiltrated the aesthetic, from the ›



The Falcon outmanoeuvres TIE Fighters as it passes through a fallen Star Destroyer.



You don't know Jakku: Rey (Daisy Ridley) readies her speeder.

number of ship designs, to the amount of creatures filling the frame, to costume designer Michael Kaplan's streamlined stormtrooper look.

"The prequels did so much, but I tried to sort of strip it down and go back to a simpler, more elegant time when there was just the Empire and the Rebellion," says Abrams. "As challenging as it was for designers to bring this movie to life, that represented a focus, helping us not get distracted and throw in the kitchen sink."

Case in point: for Abrams, the lightsaber battles in *Episodes I* to *III* were "increasingly spectacular and stylised, almost like dance choreography". So when he came to stage runaway stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) versus baddie Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) in a snowy forest, he went back to the source.

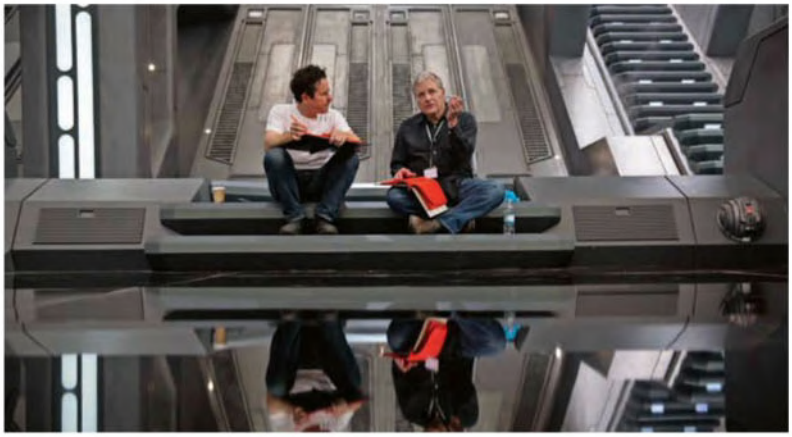
"When you look at *Star Wars* and *Empire*, they are very different lightsaber battles, but for me they felt more powerful because they were not quite as slick. I was hoping to go for something much more primitive, aggressive and rougher, a throwback to the kind of heart-stopping lightsaber fights I remember being so enthralled by as a kid."

Delivering the *Star Wars* you know and love but in a way you have never seen before quickly became Abrams's chief challenge. How do you revitalise space dogfights? You set them in broad daylight against backdrops shot in Iceland. How do you make the world fall for a robot more than they did for R2-D2? You create BB-8, a droid with the qualities of a naughty child or adorable puppy. And how do you stand toe-to-toe with the greatest villain in movie history? You make your villain, Kylo Ren, a Darth Vader fanboy hell-bent on taking over the Sith's shift.

"You can't top Darth Vader as a bad guy in design or performance," Abrams admits. "Because we needed to have a bad guy, the idea of naming Vader in association with him allowed us to harness the power of Vader in a way that felt appropriate and powerful. It allowed Vader to be part of the conversation rather than a separate one. It imbues Kylo with a special kind of darkness."









Top: Entering Maz Kanata's castle. **Middle:** J.J. Abrams and co-screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan sit on a shiny Imperial floor. **Above:** Beware the Knights Of Ren.

THE FORCE AWAKENS started principal photography at 5.38am on May 15, 2014, in Abu Dhabi, doubling for the desert planet Jakku, with resourceful scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley) barrelling along on her speeder that looks like a Magnum. It's like Tatooine but not. The same (moisture vaporators), but different (fallen Star Destroyers).

"It was instantly *Star Wars*-y," jokes Kathleen Kennedy about Abu Dhabi. "Everybody complained about the heat." Executive producer Tommy Harper, meanwhile, recalls how Abrams "wanted the big red sky, the orange ball coming up in the morning. There was a natural wind-flow so stuff would move and look beautiful. When stormtroopers tore through a trading village, you were transported right back."

Although the unit stayed in Abu Dhabi for only two weeks, the location is indicative of another pillar of the film's aesthetic. Abrams is ditching the CGI-heavy approach of the prequels and returning to the tactile, tangible, practical approach of the First Three. This meant throwing out mismatching eye-lines, pixel-packed creatures and sterile green-screen, while returning to difficult-to-get-to locations, working robots and old-school, men-in-suit aliens. "*Star Wars* was real life to J.J.," says production designer Rick Carter. "He was only 11 years old. When he goes back to it, he just wants to feel ›

• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR



Anthony Daniels is C-3PO

Anthony Daniels was on a boat to Sydney when he picked up a newspaper and a story caught his eye. "I read that Disney had bought Lucasfilm," he recalls, "and as the journey continued I felt this great weight coming towards me... In a nice way!" His hunch was confirmed when he got a call from Kathleen Kennedy, asking "if it would be okay if J.J. Abrams rang me. As if I might say, 'No'!"

Abrams's first question to Daniels was whether he'd be willing to play his signature role of protocol droid C-3PO as just a voice performance. Daniels refused *that* request, only to discover he was being tested. "J.J. said, 'Quite right!' It's so much more than just the voice. It's a physical performance, too."

For Daniels, *Star Wars* isn't something that ever goes away: he's constantly travelling for events, and enjoys the voice work (especially the "hilarious" LEGO video games). But, he says, it's still wonderful to be back. "The energy at that first read-through was extraordinary," he tells us. "I remember just looking across at Harrison and beaming." But of the newcomers in the cast, his greatest love is for that rollerball droid. "They're all wonderful, but I was instantly smitten with BB-8," he grins. "I couldn't understand how I was seeing what I was seeing. He really is an incredible piece of work." **OWEN WILLIAMS**



Twisted firestarter: Captain Phasma (Gwendoline Christie) tears shit up.



• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR

something when he is shooting that is authentically there in front of him." The capture-it-in-camera approach spread to the evolution of the aliens. Realised by *Prometheus* creature designer Neal Scanlan, who came out of retirement especially for the film, the menagerie of *The Force Awakens* ran into the 90s, mixing the latest in animatronic technology with lo-fi put-a-puppet-on-a-seesaw-and-launch-it know-how. "It has a wonderful charm and innocence about it," says Scanlan about the original film. "I can't think of another franchise where you can put someone in a small box with little legs popping out the bottom and it would be accepted. When you look back you think, 'That's quite crude,' but you remember it more fondly than that. We tried to recreate it not the way they were but the way you remember them to be."

What Scanlan created was a form of "real-time theatre". *The Force Awakens*' new creations run the gamut from a 6-metre by 3.5-metre by 4.5-metre creature operated by five puppeteers to the robot, nicknamed Big Red, that appears at the end of the last trailer, which is powered by a performer on stilts. Yet Scanlan was "humbled" by an old favourite, Chewbacca, after realising the only way to do it was the old way — knit each individual hair by hand onto a woollen suit. They also made some special modifications to mark the passing of time. "To the aficionados he has a slight paunch, much like my good self," laughs Scanlan. "As you get older things go south, and Chewie isn't immune to that. He is slightly lighter in areas. It's very subtle. We tried to hint that 30 years have passed, a mere moment in a wookiee's life."

Revisiting these so-called "legacy" creatures also made a lasting impact on the wider crew. Yet one made more impact than others. And it wasn't Yarael Poof. "The minute we're doing the Rebel Base and Admiral Ackbar walks in, everything stops," says Kathleen Kennedy. "It's just like having Brad Pitt come onto the stage. Everybody 'oohs' and 'aahs', and then you get on with doing the scene. It was great fun."

IN 1981, RAF GREENHAM Common was the site of a peace camp established by a group of courageous women protesting over the Government's decision to allow cruise missiles to be based there. Thirty-four years later, it played host to a different kind of rebellion. The air base became the home of the Resistance, the new incarnation of the Rebel Alliance, ›



Andy Serkis is SUPREME LEADER SNOKE

On his first day playing the First Order's enigmatic overlord, Andy Serkis found himself atop a towering podium. His co-stars, Adam Driver and Domhnall Gleeson, were eight metres below. Yet he had no idea what Snoke even looked like. "It was quite an unusual situation," he says, calling *Empire* from a Canadian "middle of nowhere" where he's shooting *War For The Planet Of The Apes*. "It was one of the most scary film experiences I've ever had."

Whether Snoke is a two-storey-tall giant or a floating spectre, Serkis confirms he is definitely an alien we haven't seen before, and the Emperor Palpatine of this series. "Exactly that. And he's severely damaged. Although he is a powerful leader, he comes across as vulnerable. Very scarred and disfigured."

J.J. Abrams was wary of having any CG characters in his proudly analogue *Star Wars* vision, though with such an "extreme look", as Serkis puts it, he realised it was the only way to do Snoke.

Serkis isn't exactly a *Star Wars* nut, but he is no less thrilled to be joining the pantheon. "Mainly because my younger brother Paul is the world's biggest fan," he says. He confesses he was surprised by the reaction to the first *Force Awakens* trailer, which opened with his narration. "I don't think I've ever had as much attention. I was like, 'Wow. Okay. This is big, isn't it?'" **DAN JOLIN**



Oscar Isaac is POE DAMERON

The call simply said to meet J.J. in Paris. He had a vague feeling it meant *Star Wars*, but "even that bit was under wraps". When Oscar Isaac arrived at the Parisian hotel, there were Abrams, Kathleen Kennedy and "Larry" Kasdan, asking him to sit, talking him through the movie, pitching him this role: Poe Dameron, dashing commander of a squadron of X-wings in the Resistance. "I just tried to stay cool and take it in," Isaac laughs. Man and boy, Isaac couldn't help being a *Star Wars* fan. Growing up in South Florida, it was a household religion. He has an uncle who still has all the figures in glass cases. "When I told him I got cast," delights Isaac, "he could barely breathe."

His director's vision, Isaac reports, is of a very textured world, with nuanced characters. "Poe adds a specific colour to the film. It's one that's energetic. There's almost an old-school, *His Girl Friday*, Cary Grant kind of quickness to it and that speed is something J.J. likes."

The experience, he says, "has defied what I could have expected". They built two full-sized X-wings with cockpits that sprang open. "You can jump in and fire up!" He may have worked with the Coen brothers, but he's forever that *Star Wars*-mad kid. "Everywhere you turned you were reminded this was part of a legacy." **WILLIAM THOMAS**



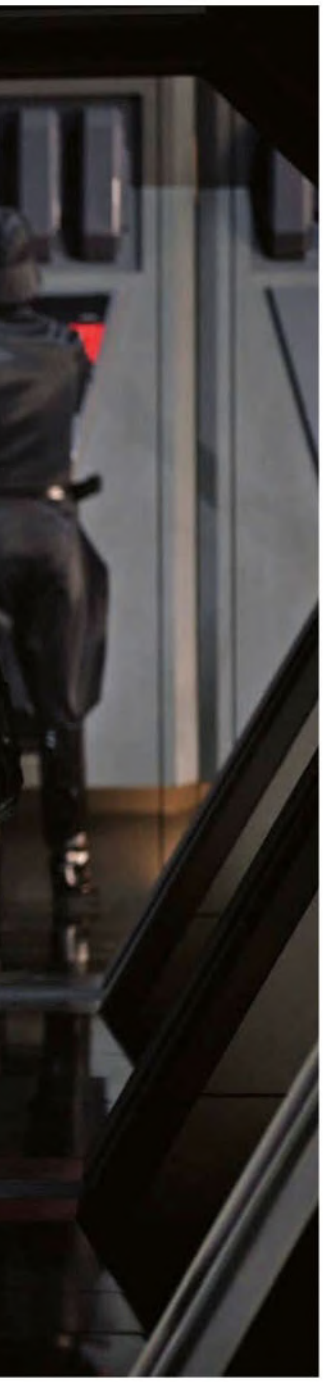
Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) under arrest – cell block 1138?

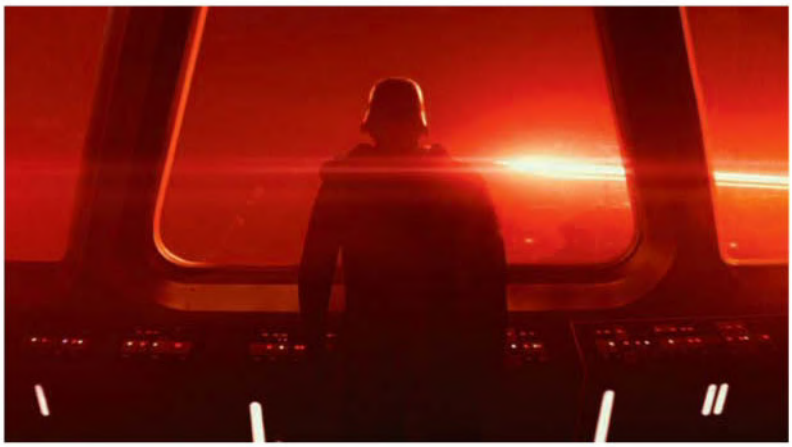
replete with full-size replica X-wings and a third of a Millennium Falcon exterior.

"Walking around seeing the Falcon, seeing TIE Fighters, you are like kids," says Burk. "It was particularly hard for J.J. because you are wrestling, 'I can't believe I'm doing this,' with actually having to be the director. Giving direction to Harrison Ford in his Han Solo outfit is just nuts."

Arriving in the UK, *The Force Awakens* became the most scrutinised shoot of the modern era. When the Falcon was snapped by microlight pilot Matthew Myatt, the Civil Aviation Authority took the unusual step of shutting down airspace after the image went viral. Over-eager nerds tracked the production to the Forest Of Dean and the tiny isle of Skellig Michael. Behind closed doors at Pinewood, Cruise, Cumberbatch and Craig reputedly played stormtroopers ("There *are* a couple of famous stormtroopers," confirms Kennedy) and the great and the good of Hollywood lined up to get a selfie with Chewie (a Chelfie). "Morgan Dameron, who is J.J.'s assistant, used to give tours and it became like the Universal tour," says Harper. "It was pretty hilarious."

One stop on the tour might have taken in Abrams, microphone in hand, leading the unit in karaoke or treating the crew to his beatbox stylings. "Every now and then he'd shoot a scene and he'd go, 'Come on, ladies and gentlemen, we're shooting *Star Wars*!' and then everybody burst into applause," says Kennedy. If you wanted that *Star Wars*









Top: Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) does his best Darth Vader impersonation. **Middle:** Finn (John Boyega) faces Ren. **Above:** Abrams on location in Abu Dhabi.

feeling, it was everywhere. You could simply take in the pill-shaped lighting and shiny floors of the evil First Order's HQ ("I don't know how the First Order kept those floors clean," says Rick Carter. "Maybe those little droids are polishing it"), or walk through the corridors, past the chessboard and into the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon.

"It's as exciting as you would think it would be," says Kennedy. "When Harrison walked on and looked around, he turned to J.J. and said: 'It's better than I remembered' — that was like the finest compliment anybody could give us."

To draw the difference between good and evil, there are not only the obvious colour schemes employed by Carter (black, white, grey = First Order; earthy tones = the Resistance) but a nifty bit of technical trickery. "Only a complete geek would notice," says cinematographer Dan Mindel, "but we had lenses specially made based on the mechanics and physics of the lenses the original films used. We used those for the Resistance because it was softer, more forgiving. For the First Order we used a newer lens to give us a harder, more austere look."

If filming started with the light side, it ended with the dark. At 21.30 on November 6, 2014, at Pinewood on S Stage, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* wrapped with Kylo Ren and the Knights Of Ren unleashing a 'Force Back'. Don't run to Wookieepedia — a Force Back is a term used by the crew to describe… What exactly?

"We'll just let that dangle, shall we?" says Kennedy. ›



Carrie Fisher is PRINCESS LEIA

"Nothing has changed except the hair," laughs Carrie Fisher of what we can expect of her return to the role that made her a legend. Or, as she delightfully introduces Leia, "Darth Vader's little girl". "I wanted little old Leia to walk by a window wearing that hairdo on the way to the bathtub," she continues. "Just show it once. But, no. I guess they thought it would be too distracting."

The point is, Leia may be older, but she is no less the tough, capable galactic princess/Skywalker twin/civil partner to a certain Han Solo. She retains that same spirit, says Fisher, that helped *Star Wars* appeal to women. Leia was a grown-up surrounded by boys. "A princess is someone who takes responsibility for their life," she says thoughtfully. "I have people come up to me and say that my character inspired them to live their lives the way they did."

With J.J. Abrams's careful guidance, the character has felt like second nature. "I am Princess Leia. Princess Leia is me," she says. "It's like a Möbius strip. My life has informed who she is, and she's informed who I am and who I've had to be. A lot of her demeanour, her passion and her willingness to go on, I've found in me."

As for teaming up again with Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford? Well, they had a ball. Fisher beams, "It was a *Star Wars* high school reunion." **WILLIAM THOMAS**

• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR



Meet Constable Zuvio, a hard-as-nails law officer keeping order on Jakku.



• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR

ON OCTOBER 19, *THE FORCE AWAKENS*' third trailer debuted during the New York Giants versus Philadelphia Eagles game. It was viewed 112 million times in just 24 hours and received rave reviews. Except the director still had what he terms a "slight concern".

"It doesn't show any indication of how much fun the movie is," says Abrams. "It makes it feel big, dark and important. But there's a critical component for me in *Star Wars* which is you are laughing. You are loving these people and they are making you smile."

For Abrams, *Star Wars* is as much a "comedy as it was a romance as it was an adventure as it was a parable", but believes it is "the humour that lets the movie take flight even more than the action". At the same time, Abrams has wrestled with how much *The Force Awakens* should pay reference to previous instalments. His rule of thumb for call-backs was to restrict them to "things we felt could happen". So Han Solo confirming the existence of the Force — "It's true. All of it" — to Rey and Finn while standing by the same console at which he debunked the Force to Luke and Ben felt, for Abrams, like a "beautiful symmetry".

"It gives me chills because that's how life is," he continues. "You learn your wife is pregnant in the same room you learn of a parent's death. It's a cycle. It felt right."

If the trailer introduces the idea of *Star Wars* mythology as urban legend, there are some things in the film that didn't make the last trailer:

1. Lupita Nyong'o's pirate queen Maz Kanata: "She has been a smuggler for a long time and has been running this watering hole for a thousand years. She is the sort of barkeep you go to for help," says Abrams. Kanata's castle, also glimpsed in the trailer, is festooned with flags that chart a history of *Star Wars* tribes and factions.

2. Andy Serkis's Big Bad, Supreme Leader Snoke: "I will say this one spoiler-y thing: he was critical in the seduction of Ren to the dark side. He is a hugely important part of the story and will continue to be."

3. And of course, Luke Skywalker, the no-show poster boy of *The Force Awakens*. "I love that anyone cares," Abrams says about the Jedi's absence. "It was always the thought to keep our powder dry but it wasn't to make people crazy. We did it because it was appropriate for the story." ›



Lupita Nyong'o is MAZ KANATA

"It gives you a unique opportunity to play a role that is not restricted to your visible attributes or circumstances," says Lupita Nyong'o of playing her mo-capped alien pirate, Maz Kanata. "I was interested in that extra flexing of my imagination to create a totally different body than my own."

In the case of Kanata, it's a body which, when we speak in August, she still hasn't seen in its final form. "I saw her develop, so it's been really interesting to see where it's gotten to today." Nyong'o herself was involved in that development process. "They were very welcoming and open to ideas," she says, though adding, "At a certain point as the layman you can't see how it can get cooler."

Naturally, it wasn't just the performance capture that attracted her. It was also the chance to become part of a galaxy she so cherished. "What I loved about the movies is that George Lucas created this incredibly rich other-world with such a diversity of culture and experience and politics," she says. "It welcomes and embraces everyone." She recalls the moment in *Return Of The Jedi* when she heard Lando's co-pilot, Nien Nunb, speaking in Kikuyu, the language of Kenya's largest ethnic group. "Me and all my friends were screaming, 'We're in *Star Wars*! We're part of it!' That, I think, is the power of *Star Wars*." **JAMES WHITE**



Peter Mayhew is CHEWBACCA

Peter Mayhew once joked that all he had to do to get cast as Chewbacca was stand up. At a towering 7' 3", the London-born Mayhew was a shoo-in for Chewie. *The Force Awakens* marks Mayhew's fifth big-screen appearance as the Wookiee's Wookiee, and he couldn't be happier about it. "All the fans had been asking, 'Is Chewie in the new film?'" he says. "So it was lovely to be able to say, 'Yes.' And it was wonderful to go back and see everybody. All the old gang were there." Mayhew last donned the famous yak-hair suit in 2005's *Revenge Of The Sith*, but it's been 32 years since he teamed up with Harrison Ford in *Return Of The Jedi*. "I was sitting in my trailer," he says, recalling his first day on set of *The Force Awakens*. "There was a knock on the door and someone shouted, 'Where's that walking carpet?' It was Harrison. He came in, gave me a big hug and said, 'Welcome back.'"

Something else that has changed very little over the last three decades is Chewie and Han's relationship. "We still have the same bond," says Mayhew. "We look after each other." He howls with laughter when he hears how Ford describes them. "We *are* like an old married couple! Especially when we're in the cockpit together. I like it."

SIMON BRAUND







Top: A First Order TIE Fighter pilot. **Middle:** Rey strips down a Star Destroyer... **Above:** ... And crossing the dunes of Jakku with BB-8.

IF YOU THINK YOU THINK about *Star Wars* a lot, imagine how much Abrams has had to ponder every corner of that universe. "J.J. asked me to move a seam on Kylo Ren's costume," recalls costume designer Michael Kaplan. "It is the first time a director has ever asked me to do that."

So while his cast and crew were trying on stormtrooper helmets, there was little time for Abrams to indulge his inner nerd. "It's not to say I wasn't always loving working on this movie, but when your job is make to sure the scene on the Millennium Falcon is working, there's not really the desire to sit in the cockpit and pretend you are flying it," he levels. "I think the most *Star Wars* thing I did working on this was to try and do my job the best I could for the fans and for new fans."

There might be another reason for Abrams's targeting device focus. By concentrating on the minutiae, it might save him from thinking about the bigger picture. One hundred and twelve million trailer views means there are 112 million different movies playing in people's heads. How do you begin to satisfy them all? Then there is The Fiscal Imperative (not the working title for *Episode I*). Read any trade journal and the narrative currently being spun suggests if *The Force Awakens* doesn't surpass *Avatar*'s box office, or reach $2 billion, or secure World Peace, it has failed.

"I feel like the expectations are on some level incredibly exciting, while on another they are absolutely terrifying," says Abrams. "The gift of being able to work on this movie comes at a cost, and the cost is there is a preposterous level of expectation, not least of which is financial. People are putting into the press what the numbers are going to be so whatever the number is, it's a disappointment."

Tommy Harper describes it as "a movie but not a movie. It's a massive business. You have someone like [*Disney Chairman/CEO*] Bob Iger who is so hands-on and great, but you are like, 'Oh my gosh, this guy just spent $4 billion on this franchise.' You step back and you think, 'Okay this is much bigger than us.'"

The immediate future for both Abrams and *Star Wars* is clear. He is transitioning to an executive producer-advisory role for *Episode VIII*, leaving the job of director to Rian Johnson, who Abrams confidently predicts will "kill it" (not in a murder-it-stone-cold-dead sense). Away from the main Skywalker storyline directed by Johnson and then *Jurassic World*'s Colin Trevorrow for *Episode IX*, there are Gareth Edwards's war movie *Rogue One*, Phil Lord and Chris Miller's young Han Solo movie ("It moves closer to the Western genre," says Kennedy) and further films based on whichever other characters are deemed spin-off worthy (Boba Fett/Yoda/Gamorrean Guard No. 2). Still, how far they all go to some degree rests on the less-is-more, familiar-but-fresh shoulders of *The Force Awakens*.

"As well as I hope it does, the truth of it for me is that I would love for people, notably younger people, to see this movie and feel like they see themselves in it," says Abrams as the dubbing session calls. "I want them to leave the theatre like I did when I was young, feeling anything is possible."

***STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS* IS OUT ON DECEMBER 17 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**

• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR

MAP TO THE STARS

The official navigation aid to the galaxy far, far away – including planets old and new (we mean *really* new)

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!



DK's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens: The Visual Dictionary* is the official guide to the film's creatures, droids, locations and technology. It is out on December 18.

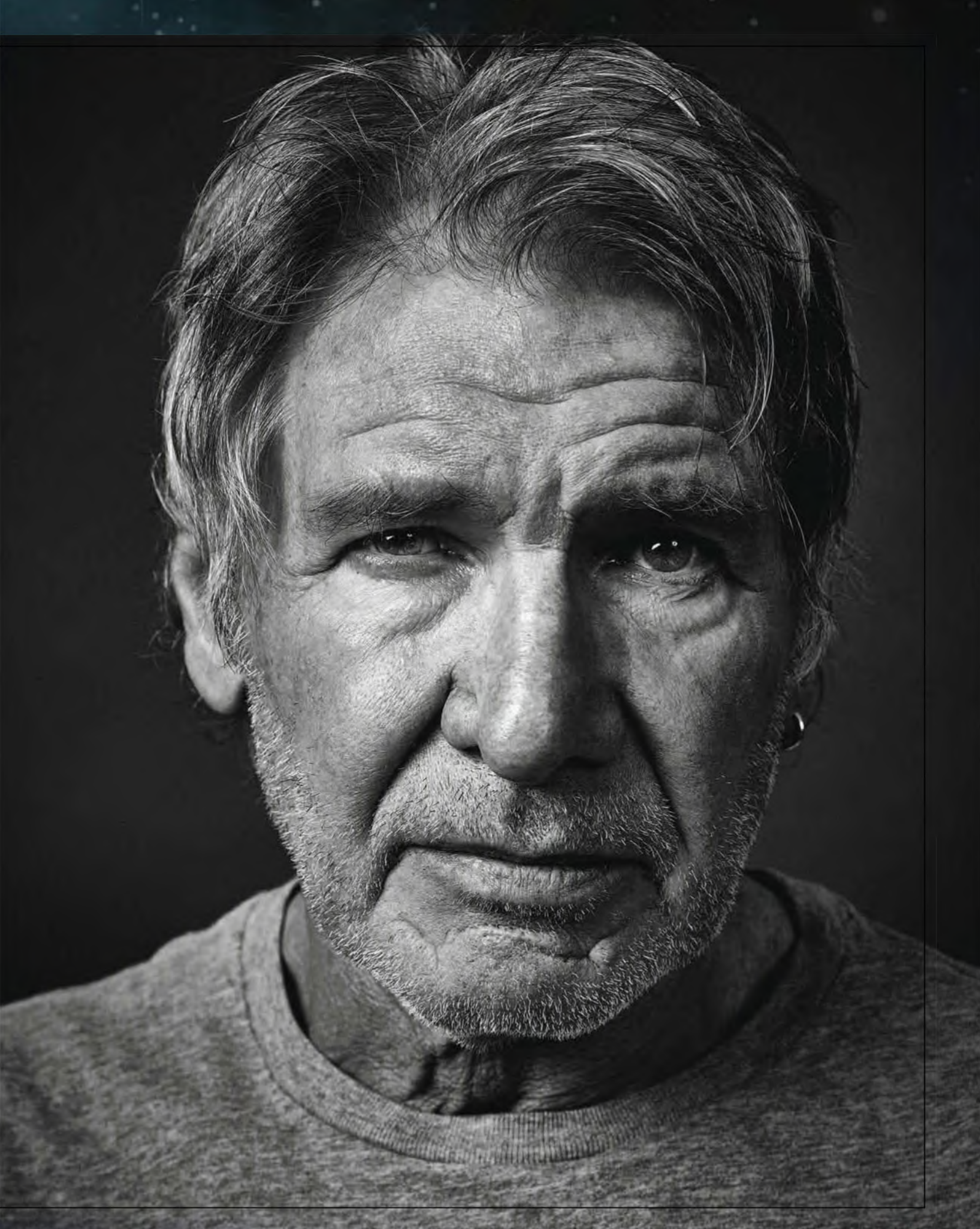
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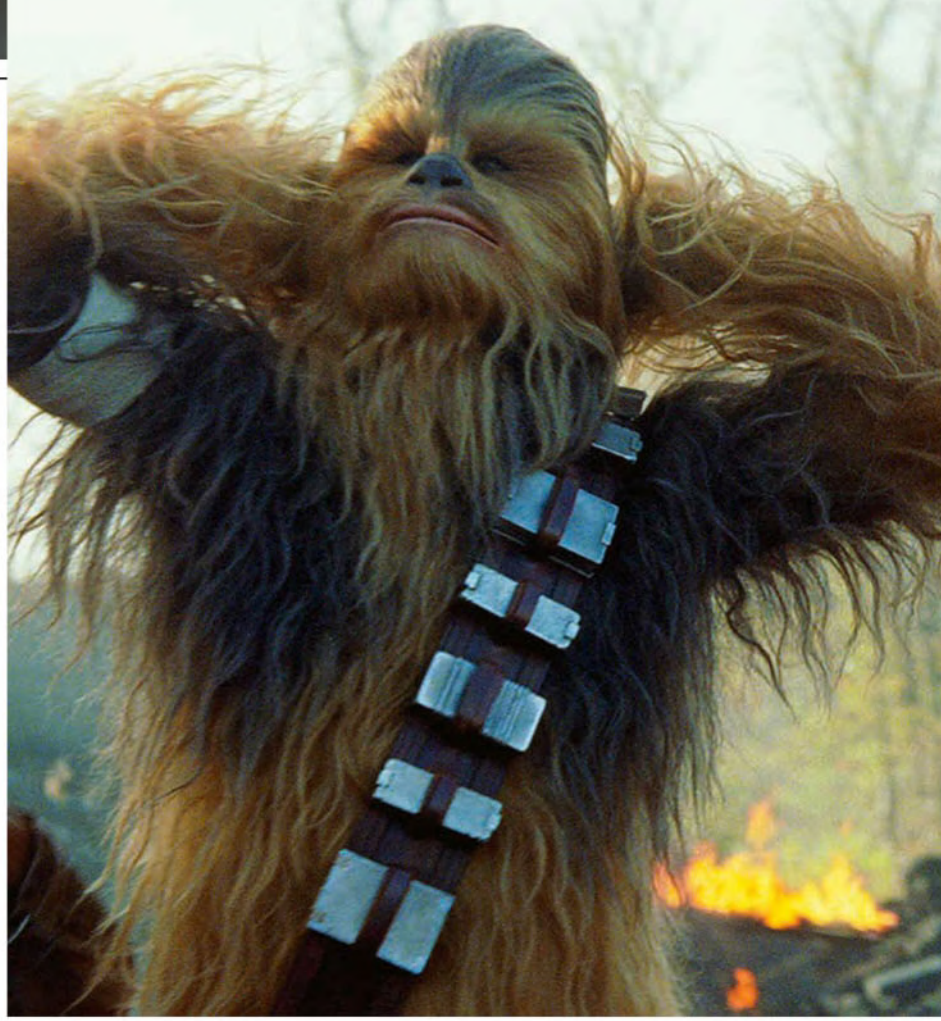
GOING SOLO

New millennium, same old Falcon. Everybody's favourite scruffy-looking nerf herder is finally back at the controls. *Empire* meets Harrison Ford to relive a long-awaited reunion. "It was as warm and fuzzy as you might imagine..."

WORDS **SIMON BRAUND**
PORTRAIT **ANDY GOTTS**

• CAMERA PRESS





FOR A MAN WHO FAMOUSLY TOLD GEORGE LUCAS, "You can type this shit, but you can't say it," and who once admitted to *Empire* that he was "less than thrilled with the teddy-bear parade" that concluded his last appearance as Han Solo, Harrison Ford is today surprisingly effusive about the cinematic saga that brought him fame. When we speak at his LA home, his dogs barking merrily away in the background, he punctuates his slow, deliberate speech with bursts of barely suppressed chuckles. (Though, in retrospect, maybe he's just looking forward to his appearance on Jimmy Kimmel's Hallowe'en show later that day, for which he will dress as a hot dog…)

Still, throughout our hour with him, Ford remains characteristically forthright. While he tells us that, to him, *Star Wars* represents filmmaking of the highest order, with a moral rigour that still has life lessons to teach us, he simply does not have the same emotional attachment to Han Solo as we do. To us, Han is an idol, the subject of action figures, posters and pencil-case stickers, a paragon of sardonic, macho cool we spend our entire lives trying to emulate. To Ford he's a character he played in a movie. Albeit one who exerted monumental influence on his life and career and to whom he is, in his own words, delighted to return.

What was your reaction when you first heard that an *Episode VII* was going to happen?
I was keen to see a script. I first heard about it when I got a call from George. He asked me whether I'd be interested in doing it and I said that, all things being equal, of course I would. Then there was a long gap. It took a while before anything was produced. By that time things were in flux with Disney and it was proposed that J.J. Abrams would direct the film.

What were your feelings about that?
I was delighted. I've been a fan of his for a long time.

Do you remember your first conversation with J.J. about it?
Nope, I don't. But it would've been about the script he and Lawrence [*Kasdan*] were writing. After I read the script there were further discussions, of course. I was engaged, satisfied and delighted to be involved.

When you first read the script, were you as intrigued as everyone else to discover where Han, Leia, Luke and the rest find themselves 30 years on?
Well, I come at this from a somewhat different perspective to most people [*laughs*]. It's a job. I'm interested in it for a great many reasons, but I don't approach it the same way as an audience would. I'm very grateful that there *is* an audience, and their feelings and attitudes about the series and about the characters are very important to me. Nevertheless, they're not consistent with the way I think about things. I'm looking at it as a professional. I'm hired to make this shit work [*laughs*].



Of all the characters you've played though, is Han Solo not one who's particularly close to your heart?
Work is close to my heart. Han Solo is a great character, I recognise his virtues, I recognise the value that he's had in my career and the part he's played in the films. But revisiting him was not an automatic jumping into the fray. I wanted to be convinced, by reading the script, that through Han I'd be able to bring something more to the project overall. Listen, I can take any wildly enthusiastic fan story and turn it into completely boring shit. I can also make shit up, but I don't tend to do that.

Having been such an integral part of it, are you still amazed at how *Star Wars* has become ingrained in almost every aspect of the culture? It's hard to think of anything else that even comes close. To paraphrase John Lennon, you're bigger than The Beatles…
It doesn't really amaze me. I'm just delighted that it has enjoyed the enormous popularity it has.

It's a big question, but how do you account for that?
I put it down to a large number of factors, including the introduction of a strongly constructed mythology that informs us about our own potential. It gives us an example of what can be achieved through courage and conviction and facing up to the struggles that are part of all of our lives. At the same time, it's all wrapped up in a fantastic world beyond our imagining. It also has great filmmaking and interesting characters. And much to my delight, it's been passed on from generation to generation.

It's hard to go through a day without encountering some reference to *Star Wars*. Do you feel a swelling of pride or get a lump in your throat whenever you see the Falcon strafing the Death Star





Top: "It's fun to stay at the YM..." Han (Ford) and Chewie (Peter Mayhew), business as usual.
Above: The Resistance is futile – Han and Leia (Carrie Fisher) on the new Rebel base.

or hear John Williams's opening fanfare?
No, no. I'm much more disposed to think, "What a great score." I appreciate how powerful it is, what craftsmanship and imagination is involved in it. I don't take pride in it personally.

How was your first day on the set of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*?
It was a fairly light day, as first days tend to be. It was Chewie and I back on board the Millennium Falcon at the beginning of our meeting with Daisy [*Ridley*] and John [*Boyega*], or the characters that Daisy and John play.

Did being back at the controls of the Falcon, Chewie at your side, bring any emotions or memories flooding back?
I don't suppose it did. We were involved in the minutiae of getting words off the page and onto the screen.

What was the atmosphere like between the returning cast?
It was friendly, collegial. As warm and fuzzy as you might imagine. It was great to see old friends.

When was the last time you'd seen any of them?
I probably hadn't seen Mark for some years. I occasionally run into Carrie, but I don't see anybody that often.

How has Han's relationship with Chewie evolved over the years? They must be like an old married couple by now.
They were like an old married couple to start with. I think people will find them very much the same as ever.

You had quite a serious accident while at Pinewood…
Yeah. J.J. and I were standing in a doorway on set discussing a scene. We had no idea the set was active. Suddenly the door came down and trapped me under it, my dislocated ankle and broken leg on one side, the rest of me on the other.

What was it like being back in the *Star Wars* universe without the guiding hand of George Lucas?
George was involved in the development of the script. It had George's genius behind it, and he left us in a very good position to pass things on to a new director. I was very comfortable with J.J., having known him since he wrote *Regarding Henry*. He was very involved in that production. I felt George had made his choices and I was comfortable with that as well.

Do you feel he was with you in spirit?
As the creator of the myth we were tending, his imprimatur was on everything. So yes, if you will, he was with us in spirit.

How did you find working with J.J. as a director? Did he remind you of George in any way?
George is George and J.J. is J.J.. They're very different people, they have a different energy and a different working style. It was a pleasure to work with J.J., to see how he managed the set, got the work done, communicated with actors and crew. He's very fluid and very collaborative.

Were you especially happy with his decision to capture the tone of the originals, keeping CGI to a minimum?
Yeah, I thought that was a wise move. I think for actors it's nice to work in a physical environment. My only problem with CGI is when it gets out of hand, when it's too kinetic and less focused on the emotional communication between the characters and the audience. Sometimes you lose, for want of a better term, human scale.

Do you think, as many people do, that that was a problem with the *Star Wars* prequels?
I wasn't there. I wouldn't deign to criticise anyone else's work.

There's a huge amount of secrecy surrounding *The Force Awakens*. Has it been difficult keeping things under wraps?
Not for me. I'm generally pretty tight-lipped. And I think it's best if the audience comes to see it with as few preconceptions as possible. Wouldn't you agree?

Absolutely. What are your impressions of the new crop of *Star Wars* stars?
I think they're a wonderful additions to the *Star Wars* world. Daisy and John are wonderful in the movie, their characters are fascinating. Oscar [*Isaac*] is extremely compelling on screen, he's got great energy and great clarity. Adam [*Driver*] is really ›







Top: "That's no moon..." Classic *Star Wars* Moment #2,187.
Middle: As the man in the hat for *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*.
Above: As the man in the bigger hat for *Cowboys & Aliens*.

interesting and complicated, he brings a very rich emotional life to the character… I mean he gives the character a very interesting and complicated emotional life, not that he brings his *own* interesting and complex emotional life to the project. From my point of view, the movie is very well cast.

Do you think it was a smart decision to cast unknowns in the leading roles, as it was with the original?
You can hardly call Oscar Isaac an unknown. But if you're referring to John and Adam and Daisy, they're clearly new faces, Daisy more so than John. I think it was a brilliant idea. But I don't think it comes down to casting unknown actors, I think it was a case of choosing people with enormous potential and talent.

What was the atmosphere like between the newcomers and the old guard? Did they treat you with proper reverence and awe?
I would not have noticed if they did. We had a job to do. They were fully engaged in doing their job and I was fully engaged in doing mine. I don't really relate to that kind of thing anyway.

So if there was due reverence and awe, you didn't notice it?
Well, you know, they helped me across the street, they helped me tie my shoes. All the things you'd do for an old person.

Given your diverse and illustrious career, does it bother you that you're still associated with two roles more than any other, Han Solo and Indiana Jones?
It's player's choice. It's not something I really think about. My memory encompasses everything I've done. I'm very grateful for the success those franchises have brought me, and for the success other films have brought me. I did, how many, three Jack Ryans?

Two.
Okay, two Jack Ryans [*laughs*]. But I don't think of being defined by [*Han and Indy*], I think of the wonderful opportunities they've given me to do other things. If I *did* think about it, would it bother me? The answer to that is... As given.

If you *had* to be defined by just two characters, you could do worse than two of cinema's most iconic figures.
It's better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish.

It seems they're going ahead with the new Indiana Jones movie…
They are?! Who told you that? You're not keeping up.

You're saying they're *not* going ahead with *Indy 5*?
No, there is a new Indy movie in preparation. I think Steven [*Spielberg*] has answered all the questions on that. You should check out his comments.

What motivated some of your more recent choices, *Anchorman 2*, *Cowboys & Aliens* and *Expendables 3*…?
[*Laughs*] I've always enjoyed doing different kinds of films and they were very short jobs. Well, *Cowboys & Aliens* was a full feature but I very much enjoyed working with [*Jon*] Favreau and Daniel Craig. And I enjoyed playing that character, a very different character to those I normally play. I enjoyed being part of Will Ferrell's wild and wacky world, even though I only worked for one day on *Anchorman 2*. I did *Expendables 3* for the hell of it. I was on my way to Indonesia to do a documentary on conservation and Bulgaria was on the way.

***Blade Runner 2* is happening. What are your thoughts on that?**
I'm delighted. It's a very good script, a very good cast and I'm looking forward to it. We start shooting in late September of next year.

Will you be back for *Episode VIII*?
You can't ask that question.

Do you mean you can't answer it?
No. *You* can't ask it. We've already established that we both think it's best to allow the audience to experience the story rather than be told about it in advance. It doesn't serve the audience for me to answer direct questions about outcomes.

Have you seen the finished film yet?
I've seen a good bit of it, in various stages.

And?
And I think it's going to be a great ride.

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THE NEW HOPES

As the fresh-faced leads in the new *Star Wars*, you'd think the pressure on John Boyega and Daisy Ridley is unbearable... Though,when *Empire* meets them, they're having the time of their lives



WORDS **JAMES DYER**
PORTRAIT **BRIAN BOWEN SMITH**



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DAISY RIDLEY IS GESTICULATING LIKE A JAWA mid-haggle. The star of *The Force Awakens* is a whirlwind of anecdotes and gestures, words falling around us like a planetary bombardment. John Boyega, on the other hand, is a picture of calm serenity. He reclines casually in his chair, one hand hooked in the pocket of a leather jacket and a broad, toothy grin on his face.

She is known mainly for cooing over a pair of calfskin gloves in a single episode of *Mr Selfridge*. He for running through South London wearing a dead-alien backpack as Moses in Joe Cornish's *Attack The Block*. Now, as Rey and Finn, the headline duo of J.J. Abrams's *Star Wars*, the pair are poised to conquer the galaxy. Although you wouldn't know it to meet them.

Sat in a suite at London's Corinthia Hotel, the pair are disarmingly down-to-earth for people headlining the biggest movie release in 10 years. Boyega and Ridley will soon adorn every bus shelter and billboard from Flinders St to Hollywood Boulevard. They will be two of the most recognisable stars in the world. But as the pair chinwag amicably about Harrison Ford and giggle at the expressions on their respective action figures, the enormity of their imminent stardom has yet to fully sink in.

Where were you both when you found out you'd landed parts in *Star Wars*?

Boyega: I got an email from J.J. telling me to come down to Mayfair. So I travelled down and met him and Larry Kasdan in this café. J.J. started thanking me for my patience and for coming back so many times. I was just staring at the table, counting the cubes of sugar in a dish and thinking, "Is it a yes or is it a no?" Then he told me that I would be the new star of *Star Wars*. You can't do a backflip in a public café, so I walked all the way from Mayfair to Tottenham Court Road just feeling crazy. I called my agent and was literally in tears.

Ridley: I was watching *Oedipus Rex*, which one of my friends was in. I was at an audition earlier in the day and J.J. had texted me, "Good luck." I was like, "What does this mean? Does this mean you're saying, 'Good luck'cause I'm not giving you the role?'" So I was at the theatre and missed his call! When I saw it, first I had to Google how to call America — I didn't know. Then I called him and he wasn't there. By this point, I was also aware that I was missing the show my friend was in. Finally he called me back and then he told me. And said I had to go back in and watch the second half of *Oedipus Rex*, not telling anyone what had just happened. I wasn't allowed to talk about it.

Boyega: You know what? I told a taxi driver.

Ridley: You just said, "I've got a part in *Star Wars*?"

Boyega: I did. A random dude driving a black cab. But he's kept his mouth shut 'til now, so it's all good.

Ridley: I told my mum and my sister. My sister didn't believe me. I told my dad and he just said, "I was always a *Trek* man." Cheers, Dad.

The audition process must have been long and painful. What were you doing during all the months of waiting?

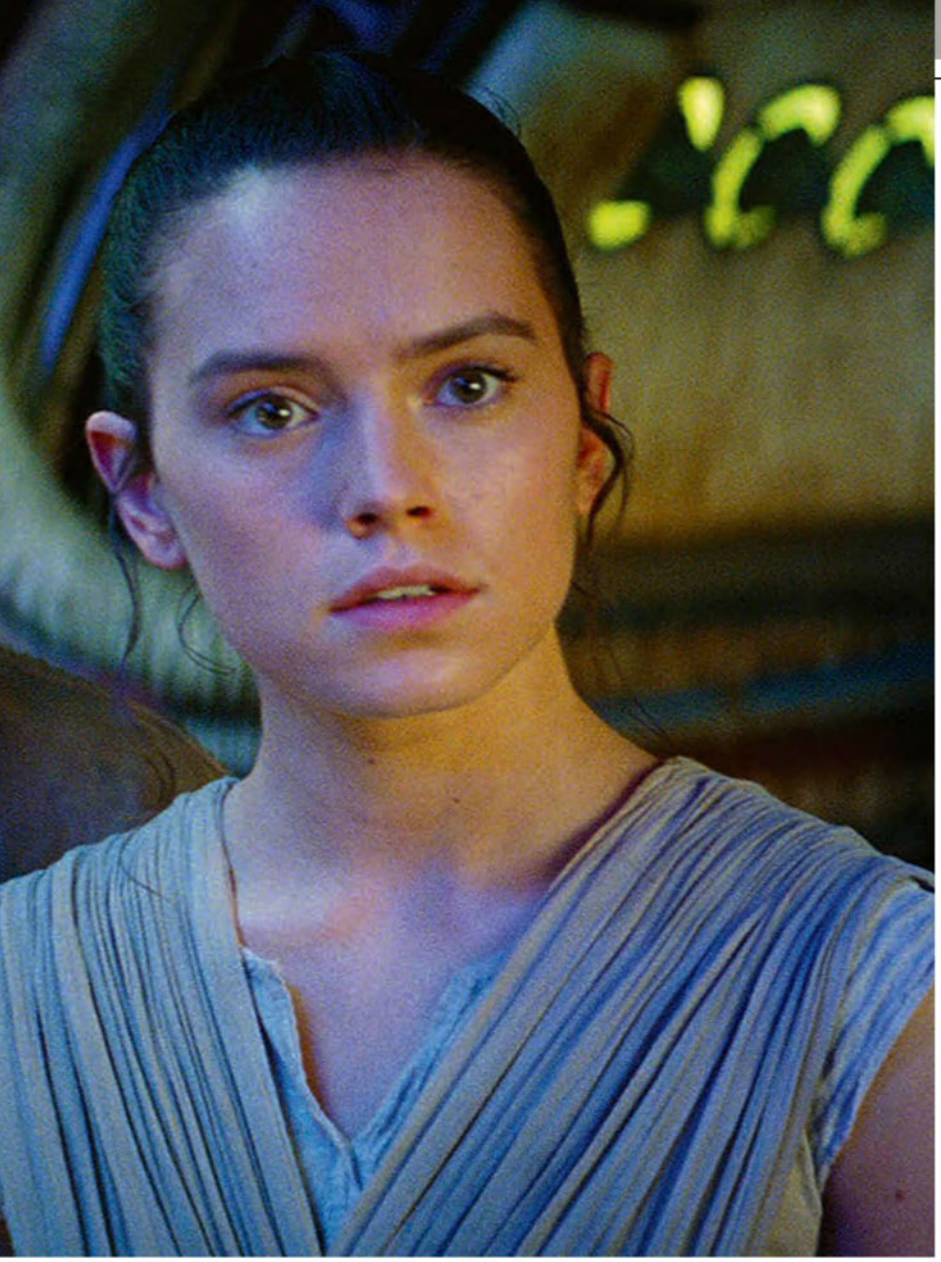
Ridley: I was working at a pub! I actually got my first audition when I was doing *Mr Selfridge*, I think. But there was a lot of time in-between. There were only five auditions across seven months so I was pulling pints for most of it.

Boyega: I was training. Running around, reading the scripts, waiting to hear back. It was a long process. And rightly so.

How did you first encounter *Star Wars*?

Boyega: I had a Darth Maul toy. I just liked the way the guy looked. I didn't realise he's part of, like, this big thing called *Star Wars*. You kind of fall into the world where your favourite toy comes from, though. So it was comic books and the TV shows and then I watched *The Phantom Menace* and the other prequels. I didn't know anything about the originals.

Ridley: I watched them, but I wasn't a huge fan. But that's because I'm not really a huge fan of anything. I've never really felt the fervour that people do about musicians or film stars or anything. That's just because of how I was brought up. My mum saw it for the first time after her finals at uni, though. It was the afternoon and she came out like, "What did I just see?" She was just so taken aback. Oh, and my hairdresser's dad is [The Empire Strikes Back *and* Return Of The Jedi *First AD*] David Tomblin!



Ex-stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) with resourceful scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley).

The first time everything went public was with that now-famous first image of the read-through…
Boyega: You know, the funny thing about that picture is you see everyone talking and you think, "Maybe they're having a really deep discussion." But we're all talking about toast or something! Like, "Oh yeah? Do you like it with the butter? Oh wow, okay, cool."
Ridley: I was actually looking at the picture yesterday and I couldn't see where [*Carrie Fisher's French bulldog*] Gary is. I remember really trying to concentrate but Gary had a bone and it was just [*makes loud slurping noises*] the whole way through. Gross. During the picture I think Gary was drinking Anthony Daniels's water over the other side of the room.
Boyega: I'd finished a gruesome training session and I had to get dressed quickly to come down to do the read-through. The funny thing is my script… You know, they put the scripts in these big black files? Mine was back-to-front and upside-down. I thought that this was the last audition! Like, maybe they were testing me. "Okay, let's see if he can do this."

That was the first time the world saw the original stars and the new generation together. What was it like meeting them?
Boyega: It was great. I mean, we were rehearsing, doing combat training and Harrison Ford just walked in and introduced himself. We had dinners and hung out on set.
Ridley: I met Harrison the week before the photo, I think. Then we'd all gone for dinner. Like, everyone. What's funny is Andy Serkis came and I'd just seen his wife [*Lorraine Ashbourne*] on stage. So I was like, "Oh, you're cool, but oh my God! Andy, move aside. Lorraine!"

Which original *Star Wars* characters were you most drawn to?
Ridley: Oh, I think the cast as a whole. The whole thing was an ensemble and even though they all had their own adventures, it was very much a group thing.
Boyega: My favourite character's Han Solo. So wherever Han's at, that's where I'm at. I love the fact that this guy's not trying to get involved in any of this mystical stuff. He's like, "I'm not trying to fight the greater good. I just wanna go home, make some money on the way." I like that about him. It's very real. That's what most of us would be doing. Don't lie. You guys wouldn't go up against Darth Vader. You wouldn't do any of that stuff.

Describe your first day on set.
Ridley: My first day was in Abu Dhabi. And when we drove onto set there were speeders everywhere and creatures walking around…
Boyega: I was walking for the whole day. No dialogue whatsoever. I was just walking. In the armour. In the heat. I kept thinking, "This is a *Star Wars* movie. Like, this is gonna be in the cinemas. People are gonna go to the movies and see this film!" It was surreal, like, "We're actually doing this."

How did you feel the first time you picked up the lightsaber?
Boyega: Man, the lightsaber came in this case. These guys brought it out and I'm like, "Now's the moment. Now's the time." I held it in my hand and I felt, you know, the clouds open up and the white doves come flying down. It feels very, very good. I hugged it for the whole day. I didn't allow anyone to hold it but me.
Ridley: I had *my* weapon, too. My staff. I mean, I think that's kind of more dangerous than a 'saber. In a crowd you're just hitting everyone everywhere you go.

It comes with your action figure…
Ridley: Have you seen John's Instagram? He's maybe got 300 figures of himself at various points around his house.
Boyega: Yeah, there's a talking Finn and I've got the Finn Bobble-head. Apparently Finn is selling a good level. The figures are up there with BB-8 and Kylo Ren. We're doing well!
Ridley: It's crazy, being on a stamp and stuff.
Boyega: Someone from Disneyland tweeted me and said, "Hey, you're a balloon now." I don't care about the action figure — a balloon? Yes!

Is it strange to think that, once this film — along with its stamps and balloons — comes out, any chance at anonymity will come to an end?
Boyega: I still walk around, you know? I went to [*UK supermarket*] Tesco yesterday and there was an old couple who were like, "There's that young lad from the *Star Wars* trailer." But apart from that, it's been fine so far.
Ridley: I still get the bus to work. I'm actually looking forward to the time where my bus has a poster and I'm like, "Hee, hee, hee, I'm on here but no-one knows I'm on here!" I'm at the beginning of the bus route, so I can just get on and sit in the back, read my book, get off and go to the gym.
Boyega: I'm never giving up on Uber. That's not happening. I'm still gonna go catch those Ubers all around town. Although I might find my black cab driver again. He's my guy. He can keep a secret. I'm gonna tell him how *VII* ends. I'm gonna tell him everything from now on!

TO THE HILT

An elegant weapon for a more civilised age... We raid the Lucasfam archives to reveal the glorious variety of lightsaber handles from *Episodes I* through *VII*



Darth Maul
The Phantom Menace (1999)



Qui-Gon Jinn
The Phantom Menace (1999)



Mace Windu
The Phantom Menace (1999) and *Attack Of The Clones* (2002)

Count Dooku
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Obi-Wan Kenobi
The Phantom Menace (1999) and *Attack Of The Clones* (2002)



Agen Kolar
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Saesee Tiin
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)

Ki-Adi-Mundi
The Phantom Menace (1999)





Plo Koon
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



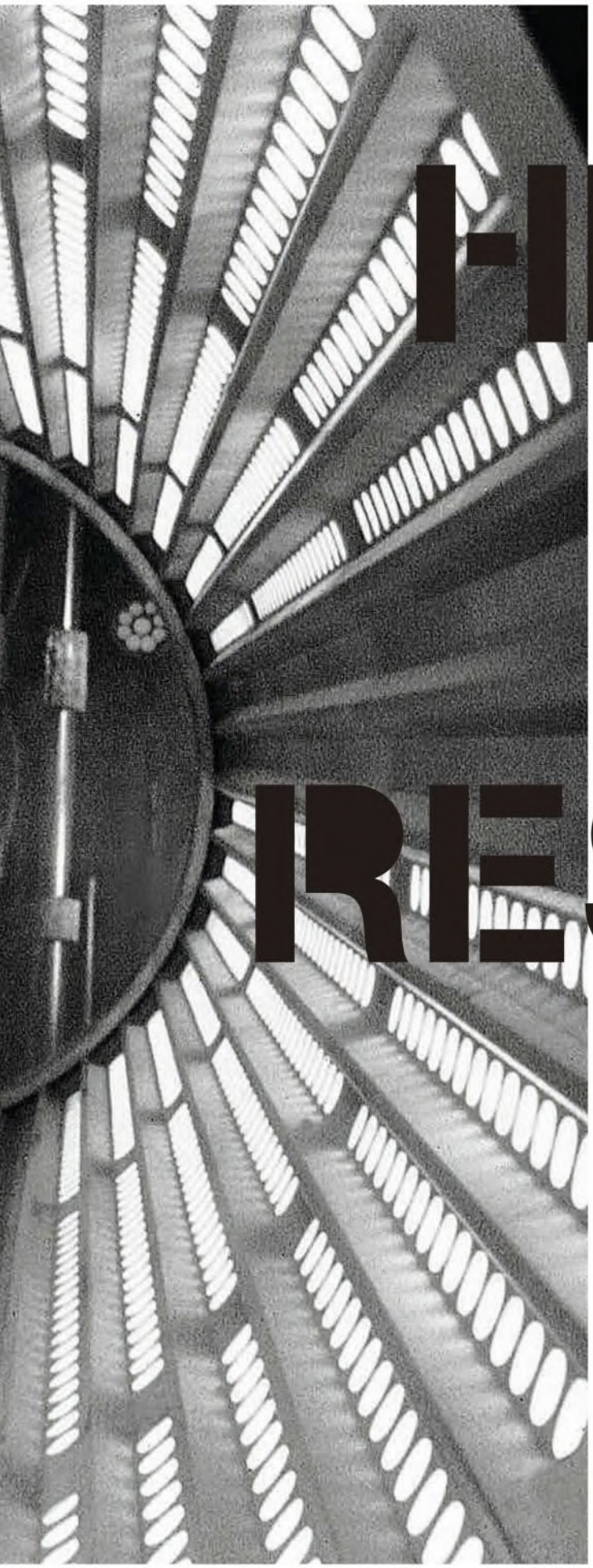
Obi-Wan Kenobi
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Adi Gallia
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)


Mace Windu
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)
Finn
The Force Awakens (2015)
Shaak Ti/ General Grievous
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)
Anakin Skywalker
Attack Of The Clones (2002)
Anakin Skywalker
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)
Yoda
Attack Of The Clones (2002)
Darth Sidious
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)
Luke Skywalker
A New Hope (1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)
Kit Fisto
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)
Kylo Ren
The Force Awakens (2015)
Luke Skywalker
Return Of The Jedi (1983)
Darth Vader
A New Hope (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Return Of The Jedi* (1983)





HE'S HERE TO RESCUE US

Mark Hamill reflects on life with Luke Skywalker, and making a return to the role he never thought he'd play again

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**



THE WAY MARK HAMILL REMEMBERS IT, IT WAS during a production of *The Elephant Man* ("or maybe *Amadeus*"). It was the early '80s, just after the Empire had struck back, and he was up there on stage, contorting his body in the classic John Merrick style (or composing music), when he noticed something in the audience. Something glowing. Back then, years before mobile phones, audiences simply didn't *glow*. "Someone was wearing a home-made shirt with all the *Star Wars* stuff on it," he recalls. "It was battery-operated, lit up and very distracting. The usher said to me, 'I've been doing this for 40 years and I never imagined I would have to say, 'Madam, would you mind turning off your blouse?'"

Hamill laughs. It says a lot about his near 40-year relationship with *Star Wars* that this is one of the most trying incidents he can remember. "People say, 'Oh, it must be a drag to be associated with one single thing,' but it's such a positive," he says. "It can be taxing when you're trying to focus on other things and it's the 800lb gorilla in the room… but it's a warm, cuddly gorilla."

In the 32 years since Hamill last donned Luke Skywalker's Jedi robes, he has focused on many other things, be they stage work, his own comic books, or carving out a career as an in-demand voice actor (for many, despite stiff competition, his take on The Joker is definitive). The 800lb gorilla was always there, but as far as he was concerned, it would never again play an active part in his life.

Then, one day in 2012, George Lucas asked him to lunch. "I thought, 'They're re-releasing the movies in 3D, he wants us to do some press,'" says Hamill. "My wife casually said, 'What if he wants to do a new *Star Wars* movie?' And I just laughed at her."

Smash cut: it's several years later, and Hamill has found himself in a Pinewood meeting room, sandwiched between Anthony Daniels and Andy Serkis, ready for the first read-through of a new *Star Wars* movie. Lucas isn't around, but his creation is barrelling on. "What we didn't foresee, of course, was George selling the company," muses Hamill. "I tell people all the time that it's completely unexpected, but on the other hand, I think it was inevitable. How could they not make more? It's such a rich source of material, and there's this gigantic canvas to be painted upon."

A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN THE FINAL POSTER FOR *The Force Awakens* was unveiled, it was missing one key element: Luke Skywalker. It's clear J.J. Abrams is holding back the big reveal of Anakin's son, but the exclusion instantly led to a rash of rumours (Luke is evil!) and conspiracy theories (he *is* on the poster, because he's actually Kylo Ren!). Several British



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Clockwise from main:
Hamill with Carrie Fisher; A light moment with Alec Guinness; Flanked by Harrison Ford and Fisher; Keeping warm on Hoth; With George Lucas and Fisher on *A New Hope*.

bookmakers offered ludicrous odds on Hamill not even appearing in the movie, ignoring the facts that we see his hand in the trailer, resting on Artoo's gleaming dome, and that he's second billed on the poster's credit block. Rest assured, Luke Skywalker will appear in *The Force Awakens*, although it's a fair bet that he won't quite be the innocent farm boy we met back in *A New Hope*. "Obviously you're seeing him in a very different time in his life," says Hamill. "There are lots of surprises in this movie. You're going to love it."

If scuttlebutt is to be believed, much of *The Force Awakens* will concern the search for the reclusive Luke, and there's a prevailing theory that Hamill spends a large part of the movie by himself. Certainly, Hamill's strongest memory of shooting the movie supports that. "It reminded me of when I was in Tunisia on the salt flats [*shooting the first* Star Wars]. If you could get into your own mind and shut out the crew and look at the horizon, you really felt like you were in a galaxy far, far away. I had that same wave of emotion happen to me when I was on Skellig Michael in Ireland. I wasn't anticipating it."

Expect Luke's seclusion to end at some point, and for the original trio of Luke, Han and Leia to be reunited. Because another thing Hamill says he "could never have anticipated" was working once more with Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher. Or, as he calls them, "Harry and Carrison. It's an affectionate thing I called them back in the day."

He laughs as he recalls how, on the original movies, he became Fisher's 'dress-up doll'. "She got me to try on her snow outfit, the one-piece," he says. "It wasn't easy. She's much smaller than I am! She tried to talk me into doing all kinds of crazy things and for the most part I would do what she said. There are appalling pictures of me where she puts me in her robes." He pauses. "But I drew the line at the gold bikini."

When *Empire* asks Hamill about key moments from the series — say, Luke discovering that Princess Leia was his sister — he's at once insightful ("From Luke's point of view, it's not just appalling, it's traumatic") and funny ("Good news is there's an attractive woman in the universe; bad news is she's your sister"). At one point in the conversation, he even accidentally calls Darth Vader "Dad Vader". It seems a shame to correct him, so we don't bother.

Throughout our time together, as Hamill prepares to go into Bad Robot's Santa Monica offices to start recording DVD extras for the film, the affection for the 800lb gorilla in his life is palpable. There had been, for a time, a question over Harrison Ford's involvement in *Episode VII*. Not so for Hamill. "I would have been the most hated man on the planet if I'd said no!" he cackles. Then he says something that would be music to Dad Vader's ears. "It's my destiny…"

TOY STORY

WORDS PAUL WILSON

The 38-year evolution of the *Star Wars* action figure – the plastic plaything that changed the world

1977▼

Star Wars fans keen to re-enact their new favourite movie in 3¾"-high (95.25mm) plastic had to be patient. There was a nine-month gap between the movie coming out in May 1977 and the first wave of Kenner toys, which followed in spring 1978. The keenest fans ensured their fix by purchasing a coupon in 1977, good for four figures: Luke, Leia, Artoo and Chewie. Steve Sansweet, formerly of Lucasfilm and now chairman and president of Rancho Obi-Wan, the *Star Wars* merchandise museum, advises that, for collectors, "a sealed kit plus an open kit and send-away box with 'double-telescoping' Luke would be the ideal combination."

Value: $4,275-$7,500



1978 ▲

Kenner's success with *Star Wars* – grossing $100 million in 1978 – was beyond its, and George Lucas's, wildest dreams. These toys are touchstones of *Star Wars* collecting, and the three original lightsaber-wielders – Obi-Wan, Vader, Luke – came with the double-telescoping lightsaber. "You pull it out, like a radio aerial," says Vader toy expert Bill McBride of sithtoys.com. "Kenner cut the design because it was a needless expense at a time when they could barely keep up with demand. There are only about 30 intact examples of Vader like this known in the world. Including prototypes, I have nine of them."

Value: $10,000

1981▼

In the year following *The Empire Strikes Back*, new figures kept coming. One of Sansweet's favourite figures – which is saying something, given he has every figure ever made among his Guinness Record-breaking collection of more than a third of a million *Star Wars* items – is the AT-AT Driver. Why? "Although little seen on screen, he had one of the coolest costumes – something that made a character like Boba Fett so popular."

Value: $350





• ALL PRICES ARE CURRENT MARKET VALUE FOR A MINT ITEM IN MINT PACKAGING (OR AS CLOSE TO THAT AS POSSIBLE).



1983 ▲

Return Of The Jedi was the beginning of the end for Kenner *Star Wars* figures. A total of 31 *Jedi* figures were produced, including Admiral Ackbar. "He was a huge hit with fans," says Sansweet. "He was an alien, he was commander of the fleet and he uttered one of the most memorable lines in *Jedi*: 'It's a trap!'" Two years after the film, with sales of figures slowing, the company began to wind down production, and by the end of 1985 stopped altogether.

Value: $75



1987 ▼

The year Tonka bought Kenner also saw the debut of the animated series *Droids*, following in the wake of the two seasons of *Ewoks* cartoons in 1985-1986. It lasted only one season but, says Sansweet, "produced the rarest production action figure of all time: a carded Vlix from Brazil [*licensing deals were not always global, leading to different figures in different countries*]. The figure had already gone to the tooling stage before Tonka's Kenner killed the second line of figures from *Ewoks* and *Droids*. The photo here is a beautiful fan-made version. If it were authentic and in this condition, it could easily bring a five-figure sum [*in US dollars*]."

Value: $14,000



1995 ▲

A dozen years after the last movie, and four years after Hasbro bought Tonka and with it Kenner, the Power Of The Force 2 line was introduced. (The first Power Of The Force line was 15 figures released in 1985 on the back of the *Jedi* line.) This was the 'bodybuilder era', when figures were sculpted with a muscular physique – reflecting the design of all toys at the time, a trend kick-started in the early 1990s with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* figures. Not all collectors were happy about that. "I understand why," says Sam Smith, Senior Product Designer at Hasbro. "But I loved my Chewie." Smith was eight years old in 1995; two decades later he is the head of the team making the 3$^{3/4}$" classic-size figures for *The Force Awakens*. "It made sense that this Chewie was bulky. He's a giant character, 7'3" [*2.2m*]. Mine was played with so much, he had no paint left on him."

Value: $32

1996 ▼

A disturbance in the Force, so to speak: new *Star Wars* content arrived, including the figures to go with it. "The *Shadows Of The Empire* project was a novel, comic series, toys and a soundtrack – in short, everything except a movie," explains Sansweet. "Sales were moderate, and the best representation of the group might be this action figure of the crime lord Prince Xizor, who almost succeeded in seducing Princess Leia."

Value: $15



1997 ▲

The Special Editions are released. There are some nice fast-food toy tie-ins – an Artoo that opens to reveal a little Leia within – but no special Special Edition toys. The Power Of The Force 2 line marched on.

Value: $6.50 ›





1998▼

It took 15 years for the most wanted *Star Wars* movie-character moment to be immortalised in action-figure plastic. "The Vader that everyone wanted was from the end of *Jedi* when the helmet came off," says Bill McBride. "But 'removable helmet' Vader didn't appear until just before the new movies came out, as one of the last Power Of The Force 2 figures." (The line ended in 2000.)

Value: $45

1999▲

The Phantom Menace is released, accompanied by a then-vast range of merch: Britain's Toys R Us stores had 375 different products on the first day of sale, June 19 (American collectors had a head-start with a May 3 debut). Most sought-after was Darth Maul: advances in toy-making meant even the smallest figures had an accurate representation of the Sith Lord's striking facial colouring. This was also the last year that Hasbro released *Star Wars* toys under the Kenner brand.

Value: $17

2000▼

"You can argue that the prequels are really the story of Darth Vader, from a boy on Tatooine to the biggest villain in the galaxy," says McBride. "There was a massive flood of product, with Vaders of all eras, especially to coincide with *Revenge Of The Sith* [*in 2005*]. But, unlike the first trilogy, the figures changed massively between *Menace* and *Clones* and *Sith*. The 'Dagobah' Vader figure, from the scene in *Empire Strikes Back*, is significant because of the level of detail, the scale and proportion." It was part of the Power Of The Jedi line, released from 2000-2002, which had both original and prequel trilogy characters.

Value: $55



2002▲

A 23-year-old failed line of toys was rekindled for *Episode II*. "Hasbro brought back 12" scale, large action figures," says Sansweet, "something that Kenner tried with only middling success during the vintage era." The main problem was that people wanted vehicles to go with figures, and such toys would be too complex and expensive to make back then. "In 2002, there were regular single packs such as Mace Windu and Zam Wesell, and then there was a supersized Jango Fett package with more than a dozen accessories."

Value: $30-$75 each





STAR WARS THE AWAKENS

• PICTURES © RANCHO OBI-WAN, SITHTOYS.COM AND HASBRO



2003▼

Between *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith* (and then again following *Sith*) came two animated series based on the galactic conflict. Microseries *Clone Wars* (2003-2005) and regular series *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014) had toy lines in tandem. "Obi-Wan Kenobi is my favourite," Sansweet says, "and I loved the way he was portrayed in Genndy Tartakovsky's microseries [*below*] and the five-and-a-half seasons of the series from George Lucas and Dave Filoni. It was great to get new stories approved by Lucas as well as General Kenobi in a new role."

Value: $13-$21



2005▲

Hello, *Revenge Of The Sith* – which brought with it a toy that sticks in the mind of Hasbro's Sam Smith. "I have lots of figures from this era," says the *Episode VII* toymaker, "but I really like 'Four Lightsaber Attack' General Grievous."

Value: $15



2010▼

Before Skywalker became one of the most famous surnames in movie history (and perhaps the most famous ranch in the entertainment industry, apart from J.R. Ewing's Southfork), George Lucas wanted to call his hero Luke Starkiller. About 35 years later, a figure was released that brought the name back. "*The Force Unleashed* video game was released in 2008," says Sansweet, "and its star-crossed protagonist was Starkiller, aka Galen Marek the Dark Apprentice. The look of this Starkiller from Hasbro was based on the features of the actor who voiced him, Sam Witwer."

Value: $15



2015▲

From 2010 until this year, eight figure lines were launched, including Shadow Of The Dark Side, Legacy Collection, Movie Heroes, The Vintage Collection and two kinds of Saga Legends. Plus a tie-in with new TV series *Rebels*. "This 'Old' Captain Rex figure is a fan favourite," says Sansweet. "Like many other fans of *The Clone Wars* TV series, I was really excited to see that Captain Rex and some of his cronies had not only survived Order 66 but would be on the side of the Rebels."

RRP: $18

2015▼

Sam Smith and his Hasbro team have been working on the *Episode VII* 3$^{3/4}$" figures since January 2014. They are all "based on real costumes that are scanned into a digital environment," he says. "Sometimes we get on-set photography, but I actually prefer not to – because then I can have the same wonderment when we see the characters in the film for the first time. Everyone on the team is so passionate about *Star Wars*. We still have people here who have been involved since the original Kenner days." Smith's favourites are Captain Phasma ("It's been 30 years since we've seen a stormtrooper, so a new design that pays homage to the original is awesome") and Sarco Plank, pictured below ("I always had a huge appreciation for the practical effects in the original trilogy, the obscure aliens only on screen for a moment").

RRP: $14.99



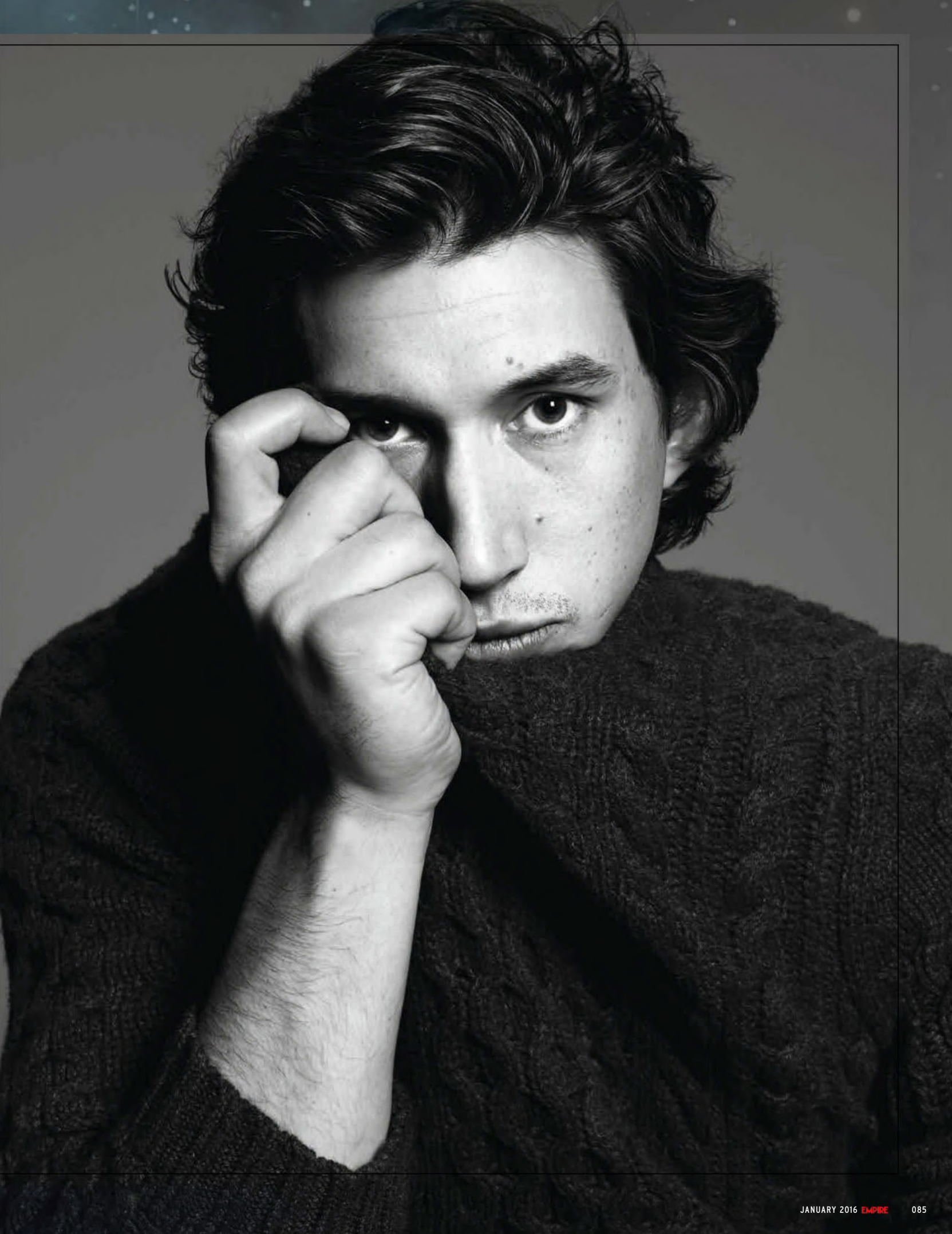
THE DARK HORSE

From *Girls* to *The Force Awakens*... How Adam Driver became the planet's most unlikely star

WORDS **DORIAN LYNSKEY**

PORTRAIT **PAOLA KUDACKI**

• TRUNK ARCHIVE





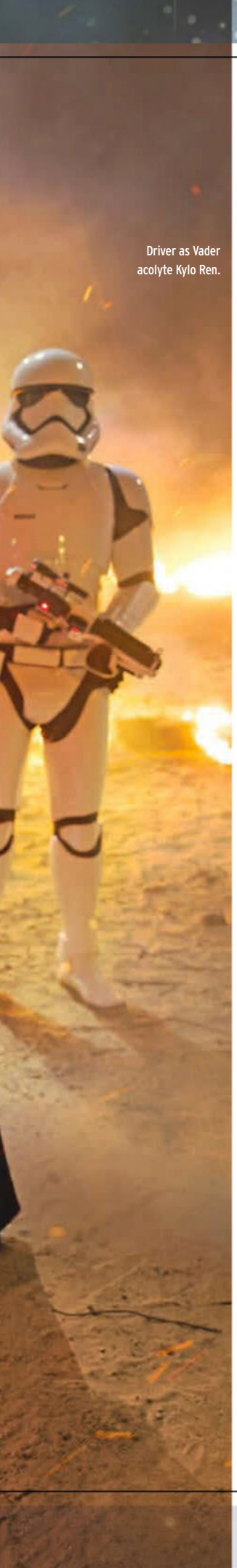
ADAM DRIVER MIGHT BE THE ONLY *STAR WARS* FAN in the world who isn't planning to see *The Force Awakens*. It's not that he doesn't think it will be good, it's just that he doesn't want to see himself in it. The last time he tried was with the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis* in 2013. "I was like, 'Oh my God, it's bad,'" he says. "I can't help but see things I wanted to do differently. I was there. That's good enough for me."

So he skipped his two excellent Noah Baumbach movies, *Frances Ha* and *While We're Young*. He didn't even see Spielberg's *Lincoln*, "which is really absurd because it's not called *Samuel Beck With The Telegraph Operator*. I'm such a small part in it." You name it, Driver's skipped it. Albeit not without a sense of guilt. "I feel like I'm not being supportive of the other people who are in that movie," he says. "It's definitely something I'd like to get over."

So might he make an exception for the most anticipated film of the year? He laughs awkwardly. "I would like to, yeah. I'm still debating it. Eventually I have to watch something."

Two years ago, J.J. Abrams saw Driver in Lena Dunham's HBO show *Girls*, and invited him to Bad Robot HQ in California to discuss the role of Kylo Ren, Darth Vader's dark-side heir. They talked about it for a couple of months, then Driver said he'd think about it. Wait, he had to think about *Star Wars*? "As a fan of the movies you don't want to do a bad job," he reasons. "J.J. said — which is why I was maybe a little apprehensive — 'Just because you can remake something doesn't mean that you should.' I totally agree with him. I feel like a lot of things sacrifice story for the sake of spectacle." He didn't like not being able to read the script until he'd signed up and he was nervous about moving from small, character-driven movies, where he's sometimes asked to bring his own clothes and pack a lunch, to a colossal FX-heavy franchise. "I didn't want to just idly jump into something. I wanted to take it seriously."

The 32-year-old Brooklynite takes everything seriously. He's the kind of powerfully idiosyncratic actor who is destined either to get lots of work or next to none. With his imposing, six-foot-three frame, edgy charisma and oddly anachronistic looks (one *Girls* character said he had the face of an "old-timey criminal"), he's one of a kind. His *While We're Young* co-star Ben Stiller said it felt like acting with Marlon Brando. *Girls* executive producer Jenni Konner compared him to a young De Niro. Driver would have been more at home in the 1970s, among what he calls the "golden generation" of actors who were intense, unpredictable and funny-looking, and came across



Driver as Vader acolyte Kylo Ren.

like they'd lived interesting lives before they got to Hollywood. Driver certainly did.

DRIVER OWES HIS CURRENT CAREER TO AN accident that wrecked his previous one. Without the mountain-bike crash that cracked his sternum in 2004, we would probably never have heard of him.

It's not that he wasn't passionate about acting. Growing up in smalltown Indiana, the stepson of a Baptist minister, performing seemed more promising than his other ways of having fun, which, as he's said previously, included climbing radio towers while drunk, setting fire to things and staging his own Fight Club. His confidence was knocked, though, when he was rejected by New York acting school Juilliard and returned from a make-or-break trip to LA after less than a week, having run out of money. He was rudderless and defeated when 9/11 happened and his stepfather suggested he enlist in the military.

When Driver joined the US Marines, he believed that would be his life. He loved the discipline and camaraderie, which he thinks bears some resemblance to movie-making. "It's a group of strangers forced to be intimate in a short amount of time. A group of people trying to accomplish a mission greater than themselves. It's not about you. You have to know your role within a team and there's someone who's leading it and, if you're lucky, they know what they're doing."

The biking accident occurred shortly before he was due to ship out to Iraq, made him medically unfit for service and forced him to consider returning to acting. This time, Juilliard accepted him and he threw himself into the course with the ferocity of someone who felt morally obliged not to muck about. "That was a big takeaway from the Marine Corps, just how precious time is, and I didn't want to waste it," he says. "I couldn't stomach telling my friends who were still in [*the Marines*] that I was being lazy or not valuing the freedom that I did have. I wanted to pursue acting very aggressively."

DRIVER USED TO WAKE UP BEFORE DAWN, RUN THE eight kilometres to and from Juilliard, and stick to a strict, self-imposed regime of diet and exercise: six eggs for breakfast, a whole chicken for lunch, daily workouts. He admits he may have seemed intimidating to his classmates. "I *was* a bit aggressive. I had a lot of judgement about civilians. I felt that I had just a little bit more life experience than the 18-, 19-year-old kids in my class. I needed to calm down a bit and they maybe needed to grow up a bit."

After graduating in 2009, Driver's only game plan was to make a living. He did a lot of theatre and landed a few small movie roles before his life was changed by *Girls*. Adam Sackler (the character was named before he auditioned but the coincidence helped) was only conceived for the pilot but Driver so impressed Dunham and Konner that he's still around four seasons later. "*Girls* opened up a lot of opportunities for me," he says. "I've been very, very lucky in the people I've got to work with. It's a luxury to be able to be choosy."

He doesn't want things to be easy. His two years and eight months in the Marines left him with a refusal to complain about even the toughest shoots and a lasting unease about the cushiness of an actor's life. The only thing he says he likes about "trite and pointless" celebrity is the ability to attract publicity and star power to Arts In The Armed Forces, the theatre company he runs with his wife, Joanne Tucker. Attention from strangers is difficult: "I think people sense that I'm more scared of them than they are of me." Even being on set can make him feel guilty.

"It's hard to justify sometimes how you get treated," he sighs. "The idea of someone driving you to work is so crazy when you think about it. There's a table of food whenever you get hungry. It can make the process of shooting a movie a bit absurd."

DRIVER'S BEEN SPENDING AN AWFUL LOT OF TIME on sets recently. Before joining the *Star Wars* promo juggernaut, he finished work on Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*. Next year he'll also appear in Jeff Nichols' sci-fi thriller *Midnight Special* as a government agent, and in Martin Scorsese's *Silence* as a Jesuit priest in 17th century Japan. Being offered the part at Scorsese's house was a career highlight: "He's the top of the pyramid." The role required Driver to lose 20kg, a challenge this self-discipline obsessive relished. "Going either way, building your body up or tearing it down, you learn about your body and what it can do." But he's wary of his dramatic weight-loss becoming a story of heroic actorly commitment. It's merely what the movie needed. He enjoyed quizzing Scorsese about making *The King Of Comedy* and seeing how much freedom the director gave his actors. "He encourages you to add your opinion to the mix and that's why he's hired you, which is a weird thing because he's *Scorsese* so your impulse is to be like, 'Just tell me what to do and I'll do it!' But he doesn't want that."

The Force Awakens demanded a different kind of physicality. Driver didn't just need to know his way around a lightsaber; he needed to convey Kylo Ren's personality from behind a black-and-gold helmet. "Playing someone who's masked, your body plays such a role in what you're trying to play. What was so powerful in the original trilogy is that even though [*Darth Vader*] was behind a mask you could always feel [*him*] thinking. We had to do mask work in school. Like putting on a parrot mask and trying to embody a parrot." He laughs. "It was a little bit different."

Screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan says, "There's never been a character quite like the one that Adam plays." Most people describe Kylo Ren as the movie's villain but Driver thinks that the really worrying bad guys are the ones who believe they're good. Beware the righteous fanatic. "When they think their actions are morally justified it makes them dangerous and unpredictable. There's no level they won't go to to accomplish what they're after. I never thought of the character as an evil person." He was impressed by how much flexibility he was allowed while performing Ren. "I thought that *Star Wars*, because of all the special effects and moving parts, would have been worked out for me before I got to set. But I was surprised by how much room there was with improv during the action, and how you interpret lines."

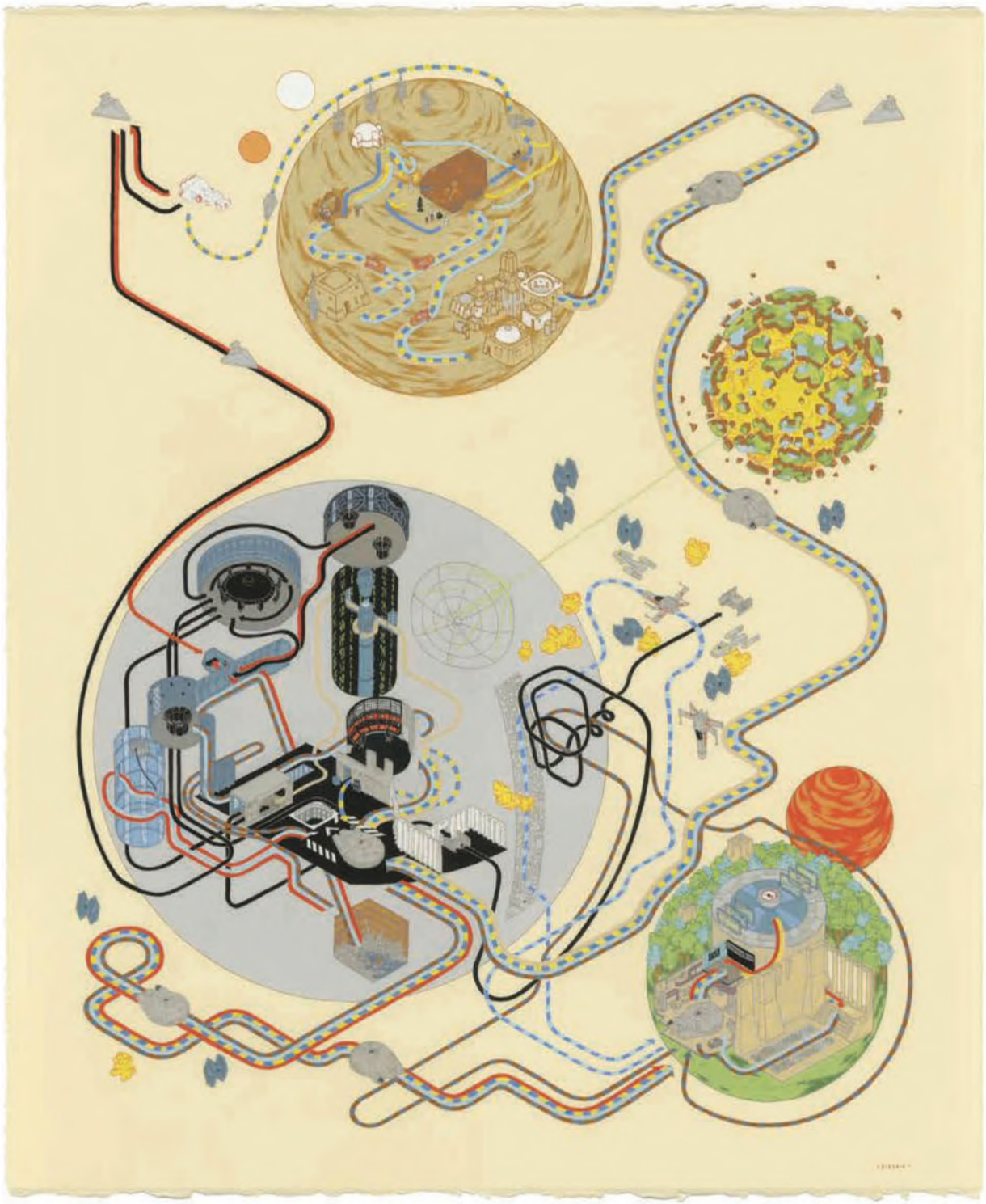
Driver is someone who talks eloquently about the craft of acting only to apologise for sounding "actory". One thing he's learned from working with people like Scorsese, Spielberg and Abrams is that even the greatest talents never think they've nailed it. "The pursuit of trying to get it right is kind of useless," he says. "You'll never figure it out regardless of what you accomplish so it's best to be open to being wrong as much as possible. There are no right answers to anything, really. The minute you think you're right you're closed off to something that might be more interesting."

Driver sounds like he sometimes drives himself crazy thinking about this stuff, but it's this combination of instinct and intellect that makes him one of the most mesmerising actors of his generation, even when he's wearing a mask and hood. Adam Driver should definitely try to see more Adam Driver movies. He's missing out.

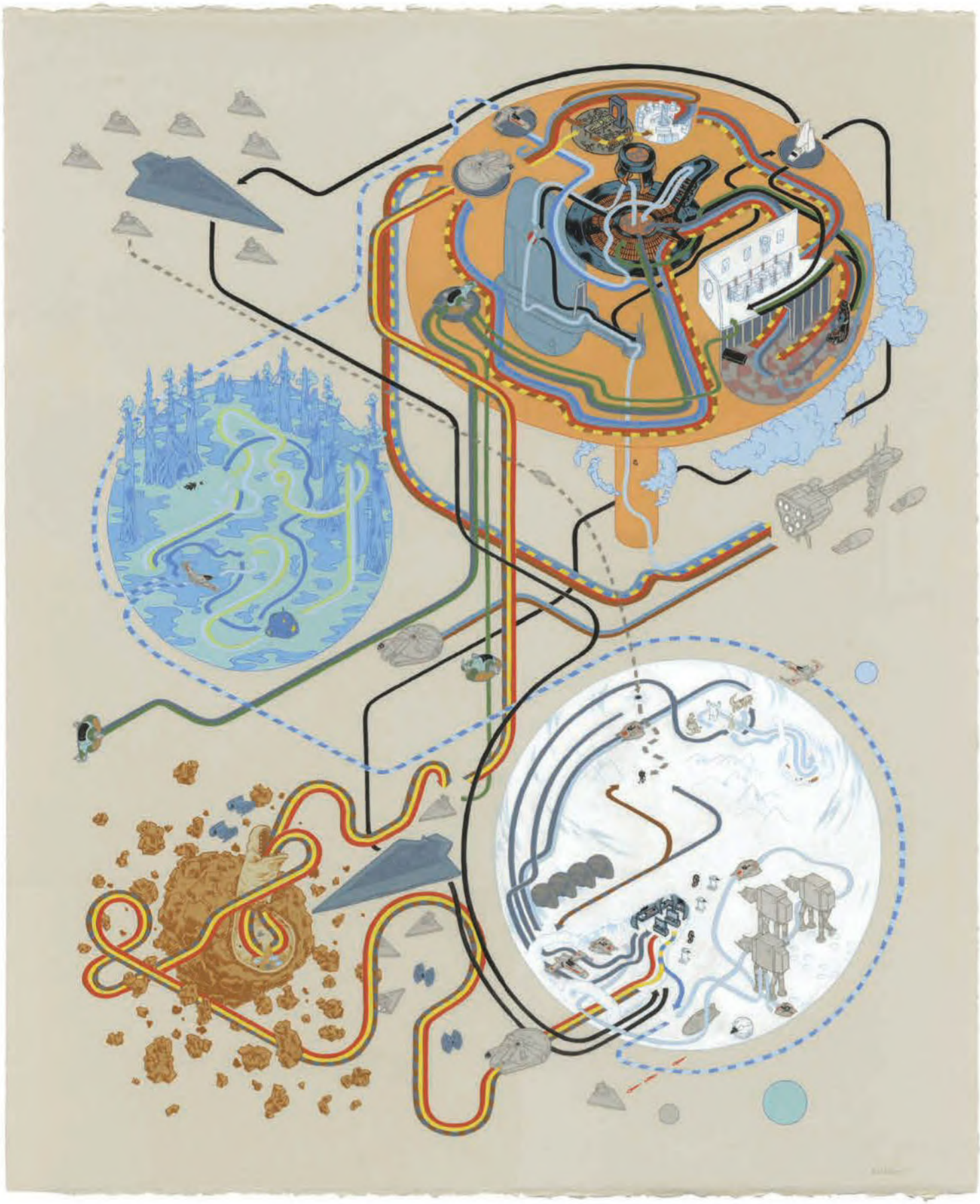
WAR PATHS

Three movies. Three maps. Your favourite trilogy in cool-as-Hoth cartography

ILLUSTRATIONS **ANDREW DEGRAFF**



EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE



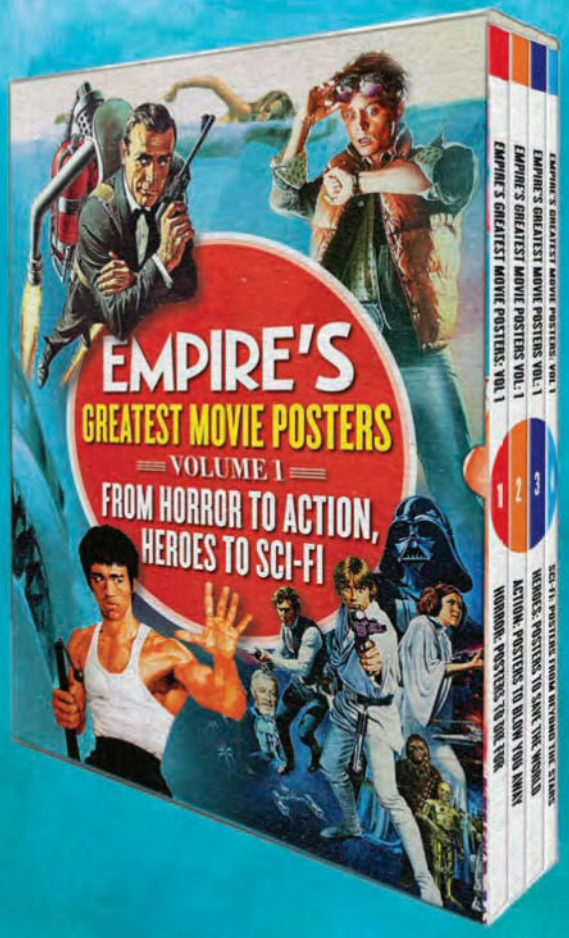
EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



EPISODE VI: RETURN OF THE JEDI

EMPIRE

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Gwendoline Christie, photographed exclusively for *Empire* at the Corinthia Hotel, London, on September 25, 2015.

THE IRON LADY



Best known as *Game Of Thrones'* Brienne of Tarth, Gwendoline Christie is set to become another fan favourite: Captain Phasma, the 'Boba Fett' of *The Force Awakens*

WORDS **JAMES DYER**
PORTRAITS **STEVE NEAVES**

EARLY ON IN THE PRODUCTION of *The Force Awakens*, *Star Wars* producer Kathleen Kennedy suggested that *Game Of Thrones* star Gwendoline Christie Google "female hero". Together the pair looked at the resulting images. "They were all very conventionally attractive women in body-skimming outfits," recalls Christie. Then Kennedy said, "Don't you think that that's so limited?"

Christie is anything but limited. At 6' 3", she cuts an impressive figure as the First Order's head stormtrooper, Captain Phasma (so dubbed as a nod to cult horror film *Phantasm*'s shiny, homicidal sphere). All mirrored plates and menace, with red-trimmed shoulder cape and nickel-plated blaster, Phasma is a sight to behold.

"A chrome stormtrooper!" cries Christie. "The day I met [*costume designer*] Michael Kaplan for the first time, he laid out that incredible costume. I slipped into a body suit and then had this armour applied to me. At the end, when they put the helmet on, I looked in the mirror and… the first thing I did was some sassy moves, because you've just got to, right? Then Domhnall Gleeson walks in, looking phenomenal in his uniform. And then J.J. [*Abrams*] comes in. I felt like I was having some sort of mind implosion. I didn't want to take it off!"

Impeccably polite and blessed with a lusty, infectious laugh, Christie shines with childish delight at the very mention of *Star Wars*. First exposed to *Episode IV* at the age of six ("It was on [*TV*] one of the first Christmases I remember"), she has loved Lucas's saga ever since.

"As soon as I heard that they were making *Star Wars* again, I was like a dog with a bone. Every part I was offered I'd say, 'That sounds great, but I want to be in *Star Wars*! Please, please, I want to be in *Star Wars*.' I was in New York at the Season 4 premiere of *Game Of Thrones* when I got a call saying I'd got an audition. I had to fly home early for it, just sort of grinning all the way."

Christie's persistence paid off and, as the shelves of shiny figurines at your local Disney store will attest ("I *love* the Phasma dog-chew toy!"), she has managed to bag the film's coolest-looking character. "Being in that armour meant investigating the character in a different way," says Christie. "The way that she stands becomes very significant, the way she walks is very significant, the way that she moves a hand gives us a lot of information about the character." *Empire* insists she reminds us of a certain other *Star Wars* villain who's supercool, taciturn and clad in an iconic suit of armour… "She *is* something of a Boba Fett-style character," Christie admits.





Top: As the First Order's Captain Phasma in *The Force Awakens*.
Above: Armour of a more retro kind as *Game Of Thrones*' Brienne.

A former gymnast, Sussex-born Christie turned to acting after a spinal injury put paid to a life on the bars. She made her movie debut as Classy Shopper 2 in Terry Gilliam's *The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus*, snagging a similarly fleeting role in the director's follow-up, *The Zero Theorem*. "I loved his films when I was growing up," she says. "Meeting him, working with him, that was a dream come true. And he was the sort of person that made me think that, maybe, there might be a space for me in this world."

That space ultimately took the form of towering swordswoman Brienne of Tarth in HBO's *Game Of Thrones*. Arriving at the audition made-up and fully costumed, Christie was, according to *Thrones* creator George R.R. Martin, cast without debate, and established herself as one of the most popular characters on television's most talked-about show. Brienne not only transformed Christie's career but also helped highlight an issue that she has long struggled with, regarding physicality and the way women are depicted on screen. To be embraced as an unconventional heroine, one who is neither conventionally attractive nor sexualised in any way is, to her, both heartening and progressive; a sliver of hope that attitudes to women in film and television are shifting.

"It's a great honour for me to play a part like Captain Phasma," she says, "because I think it is changing things. It's exciting for me being the first [*major*] female villain in *Star Wars*, but also a villain where we're all excited about who she is and what she's going to do, rather than just her flesh."



A LONG TIME AGO, JUST NOW

BY SIMON PEGG

Star Wars has been a significant part of my life since 1978. Over the years, my relationship with it has grown, evolved and developed in ways I could never have anticipated. Least of all, that I am now a cast member and sounding board for J.J. Abrams on the new instalment of the saga



ON MAY 25, 1977, SOME 10 MONTHS before I would eventually see it myself, *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope*, then simply *Star Wars*, was released in just 42 theatres across the US. Exactly 37 years later, the day before I'm due on the set of *Star Wars: Episode VII The Force Awakens*, then simply *Episode VII*, I scare the bejesus out of J.J. Abrams by screeching dramatically at the fact that his suite, at the Abu Dhabi hotel complex we are staying in, is number 37.

My first intimation of this epoch-defining space opera was through merchandise. Two days before my eighth birthday, I visited a friend and had my first encounter with Luke, Leia, Han et al, in the form of a sheet of rub-on transfers by Letraset, which featured two dioramas depicting the Death Star interior and the surface of Tatooine. The transfers presented a variety of odd-looking characters, including a boy in pyjamas, a dog-faced man in black, a number of similar-looking men in white and a bearded man in a cloak, whose sword appeared to be on fire. There was something utterly beguiling about these enigmatic figures. I was intrigued by their appearance, desperate to know their story. A few weeks later, my questions would be answered and my life would change forever. At the *Star Wars* Celebration at London's ExCeL in 2007, I bought two sets of the same transfers, at auction for a very reasonable price, and completed one of many *Star Wars* circles that have occurred throughout my life.

I went with my mother and stepfather to the ABC Cinema in Gloucester to see the film everyone was talking about. *Star Wars* had been all over the news for breaking box-office records. The TV showed lines of excited people outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, underscored by the tinkling theme of John Craven's *Newsround*, and my appetite for this enigmatic spectacle had been further whetted. Nick Frost and myself attended the premiere of our movie, *Paul*, a film replete with *Star Wars* references, at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. I am unsure what was more exciting, our film premiere or the location.

I strangely don't remember watching *Star Wars* as clearly as emerging into the night afterwards, clutching the poster I'd bought from the foyer in a daze of elation. The poster, depicting Chewbacca, arms protectively outstretched around Princess Leia, who is clinging to his fur, and Luke Skywalker and Han Solo pointing their blasters at some unseen foe, was rolled into a tube and handed to me to carry to the car. Walking up The Oxebode in Gloucester town centre, I brandished the tube as if it were a blaster and made the first of countless "pew-pew" noises I would intone throughout my childhood and into adult life.

And now I am standing on the set of the Millennium Falcon (the entrance corridor with the smuggling compartments), holding Chewbacca's bowcaster, quietly "pew-pewing" to myself, waiting for Han and Chewie to arrive on set and make that entrance. I've been on a number of film sets over the years, witnessed a number of cool moments, but I have never seen so many people gathered around the monitors as on that day.

There are several monitor stations around the set, broadcasting the video feed from A, B and C cameras. There's video village, where the producers, writers, guests and, most importantly, the script supervisor sits; the sound department, VFX department and a few other miscellaneous feeds for various departmental needs. Each is crowded with crew who have stopped to view this momentous occasion. A number of them are the offspring of original *Star Wars* crew members. The whole thing has a palpable sense of film history being made, a sense that would have been completely absent 39 years earlier, as George Lucas struggled to make the original film, little knowing how significant it would be, not just in terms of its effect on the

cinematic landscape but on the concept of film merchandising.

I bought my first *Star Wars* figure from the toy department of Debenhams, Gloucester. It was R2-D2, a delicate recreation of the lovable astromech droid, the head of which revolved, making little pinging sounds. Now I'm taking a photo of my five-year-old daughter with her arm around the real thing. Later, she's kneeling by new droid on the block BB-8, as the brilliant team who operate him activate his remote and puppeteer him from around a corner. She is completely beguiled, patting his domed head and talking to him as he nods and wobbles like a puppy. Knowing the next stop is M Stage and the Millennium Falcon interior, I encourage her to let BB-8 go back to work, to which she says, "Just one more hug, dad." In this moment I know this new addition to the *Star Wars* universe is going to be a phenomenon just as Artoo was 37 years earlier, inspiring me to make him my first purchase and the best 99p I ever spent.

Eventually, I pry her away and head for the Falcon. We wander around the familiar corridors; sit at the chess table. She climbs into Han and Chewie's bunks respectively. Eventually we get to the cockpit — dad gets Han's seat, daughter gets Chewie's. Just two years older than my daughter I had pinned another *Star Wars* poster to my bedroom wall. Han, Ben, Luke and Chewie, sitting in that same cockpit, looking out with concerned expressions, most likely at the size of that moon.

Back then, my collection of *Star Wars* merchandise grew steadily. The Christmas of 1978 was easy for my parents. My mother has a photo of me surrounded by freshly opened gifts, including a *Star Wars* pillow case, book and Princess Leia action figure (I'm also wearing football things, but I grew out of that). Now I'm strolling around the Resistance base at Pinewood Studios, arm in arm with Carrie Fisher, a woman whose image I used to kiss before bed, talking about how strange it must be



Above: Pegg on Christmas Day 1978, aged eight, surrounded by *Star Wars* gifts.
Below: Hugging the walking carpet on set.

"The whole thing has a palpable sense of film history being made."

being back in the universe. She shrugs it off, but I know she's playing it down because she's tough and cool and funny as fuck. I give her a hug and unabashedly tell her that I love her. She grabs my hand, regarding my wedding ring and shoves me off with a profanity. She is as special to me now as she was then. I smile a lot that day. Almost as much as I do the following day as she and I discuss *Star Wars*-related porn in the make-up trailer.

Meeting the other cast members is a similarly emotional experience, whether it's watching playback with Harrison Ford (seeing Han Solo put on his Indiana Jones-style glasses only makes him cooler), chatting with Anthony Daniels or Peter Mayhew (both delightful), or unabashedly hugging Mark Hamill like we are old friends. In some ways, at least for me, we are.

I am on set as a consultant, acting as a sounding board for J.J., who is making tweaks to the already wonderful screenplay. My computer is open in Final Draft and, at the top of my screen, the scene heading reads, "INT. S-REDACTED-R — DAY". I hear a familiar voice and turn to see Mark walking onto set, looking trim and cool, with a beard that he grumbles about but makes him look handsome and Jedi-like. When they shot Luke placing his robotic hand on R2's head, a moment glimpsed in the trailer, I sat at the monitors with Mark's family and marvelled at the huge significance of the moment. Back in the playground of Castle Hill Primary School, we decided who would be who in our break-time game of *Star Wars*. I turned around, touched the ground and, "Bagsie be Luke!" I always did back then. There are many who would argue Han to be cooler, but I was blond and lived in a place that felt far from the bright centre of the universe. It only felt right; I wanted to be a star pilot and it was all such a long way from where I was. Luke was my hero, still is.

In 1981, I received a gatefold double album of John Williams's score to *The Empire Strikes Back*, which is still my all-time favourite film score. I would sit in my grandmother's front room for hours listening to it and imagining myself in my own *Star Wars* movie as Luke's younger brother — an eight-year-old boy, tagging along behind his older Jedi brother. At that time, a *Star Wars* film with a small child in a main role seemed perfectly reasonable to me. I was young, what did I know?

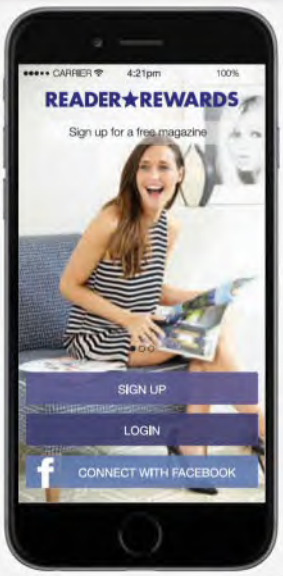
Now, I'm sat on a comfy sofa on the scoring stage at Sony Studios in Culver City, California, listening to John Williams score *The Force Awakens*, his peerless musical cues lovingly applied to the images on the screen. It sounds like *Star Wars*: the new stuff sounds like it should; the old stuff brings the hairs on the back of my neck to attention. As Han and Leia's theme plays, producer Bryan Burk FaceTimes Lawrence Kasdan so he can hear it. I smile and wave at the man who wrote *The Empire Strikes Back*, as well as this newest instalment of a story that has been a huge part of my life for almost 40 years. Through good times and bad, as a fan, a student, a detractor and collaborator, *Star Wars* is without doubt the defining film in my life.

Six months ago, I logged on to eBay and found the same gatefold edition of John Williams's *Empire* score I owned as a child (still do) and gifted it to J.J. Abrams for his birthday. Not just as a birthday present, but as a thank you for literally making my childhood dreams come true. After a period of time when I thought *Star Wars* was a mere memory, buried in an avalanche of disappointment and diminishing returns, I found myself contributing to the very story that had inspired me so much as a child. As an actor, as a writer, as a reborn fan. There are so many more circles I could cite, but there are more interesting things to read in this month's *Empire* concerning this particular milestone in cinema history, so I'll leave it here.

Thirty-seven years ago, I walk into the ABC Cinema Gloucester, unaware that I am taking my first step into a larger world. The Force, it would seem, is with me.



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ReView



Win!
Southpaw and Christmas Evil on BD, Sammy J & Randy In Ricketts Lane, Iris, Spooks: The Greater Good and Dark Was The Night on DVD and StalkHer and The Night Crew on DVD or BD!
p112

REWIND

OH, ALFIE!

What's it all about, man? The entire *Psycho* film legacy makes its way onto Blu-ray and DVD
p108

Plus!

NEW RELEASES

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Check out the *Empire* Viewing Guide to Marvel's little film that could... and did

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BOOKS & GAMES

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Terry Gilliam's motormouthed autobiography vs *Star Wars Battlefront*. Close run thing...

CLASSIC SCENE

114
Frankly, there is not enough *Star Wars* coverage in this issue.

DVD DVD BR BLU-RAY UV ULTRAVIOLET N NETFLIX PRESTO QUICKFLIX STAN iTUNES GOOGLE PLAY



Ant-Man

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / RATED **PG**

DVD BR

SMALL WONDER



WHEN PEYTON Reed's *Ant-Man* opened in July, its key rival was, in a sense, itself — or at least, a version of itself: that which would have come to pass had Edgar Wright, the project's instigator and original director, and Marvel Studios not parted company. But now the dust has settled, it's time to consign Wright's version to the Quantum Realm, and consider Reed's version for what it is. Which is the best Marvel movie of the year. A big statement for such a small film, but then, small was exactly what was required after the often-brilliant but dense planet-pummelling antics of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*.

Ant-Man, for all its production issues, feels like a breath of fresh air — a quirky, bubbly caper flick that feeds off the charm of its affable hero. Star (and co-writer) Paul Rudd has been a past master at light comedy for years, and those rhythms and instincts fit perfectly here. It'll be interesting to see how his Scott Lang fits into *Captain America: Civil War*.

Rudd also shines in the special features, which are fairly first-base (short featurettes, defanged gag-reel). However, intriguing deleted scenes (including one where Lang first meets Hank Pym while casing his house) and a fun Rudd/Reed commentary save the day. On the latter, we learn that Rudd still has a voicemail from Michael Douglas, and that The Cure's *Plainsong*, which features heavily, comes from the second CD Reed ever bought. Most notably, during the post-post-credits sting (a clip from *Civil War*), Reed tries to get Rudd to declare whose side he's on — Iron Man's or Captain America's. For the record, it's… **EXTRAS** Making-of, more.

CHRIS HEWITT

EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**

WHAT IS THIS – A VIEWING GUIDE FOR ANTS?



00.39

Young Hank Pym

The movie begins in 1989, introducing Hank Pym, the original Ant-Man, as a crusading S.H.I.E.L.D. member. And that *is* Michael Douglas, blended with a younger double and some CG facelifting courtesy of FX company Lola. "That visual effect terrified me the most," says director Peyton Reed. "Everyone knows what Michael Douglas looked like 25 years ago. But it doesn't feel plasticky, or have that Uncanny Valley feel to it."

18.27

Farewell, Frank

In a nod to *RoboCop*, Joe Chrest's businessman Frank pays the ultimate price for opposing evil CEO Darren Cross's (Corey Stoll) plans, getting zapped and reduced to a small mound of what looks like jam. And *was* jam. "Pre-CGI, as a stand-in, we put some Smucker's strawberry jam on there," laughs Reed. "There is some remaining jam in the final shot."



24.10

Breaking Bad

Yeah, the wonders of science! Here, Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) breaks into Pym's home, overcoming several obstacles using nothing but his smarts. "Adam McKay [*who co-wrote with Rudd*] has this friend who's a security expert," says Reed. "He could fuck up your life in a million different ways. And this guy was able to walk us through all the different versions of how Scott could break in somewhere. We talked to him about freezing metal and rigging a thumb-print reader."



30.30

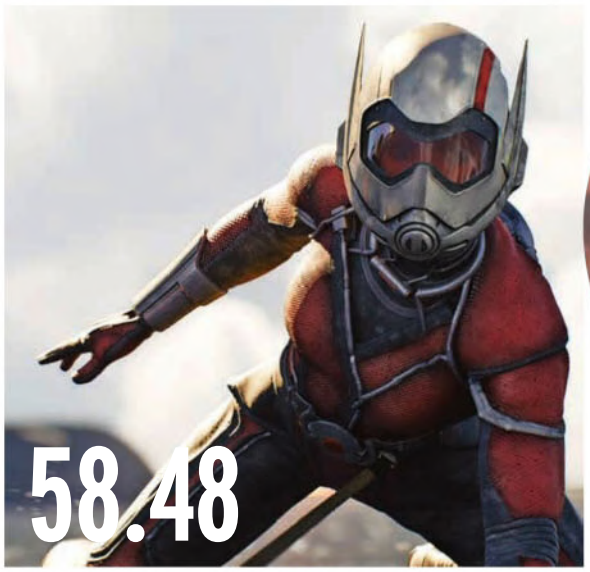
In The Tub

Scott first tries on the Ant-Man suit in a bath, and gets more than he bargained for. Throughout, Reed carefully frames the shrinkified Scott in the context of other objects – a ring-pull, a plug one-and-a-half inches in diameter – for scale. "This was one of Paul's first days in costume," says Reed. "And one of the last effects we finalled. The tub sequence is so long, there was nowhere to hide."

32.53

The Original Ant-Man

When Scott lands on a car during his first run-out in the suit, he draws the attention of its driver. This is Garrett Morris, former star of *Saturday Night Live*, who played Ant-Man in a 1979 sketch alongside Bill Murray as Superman, Dan Aykroyd as the Flash and John Belushi as the Hulk.



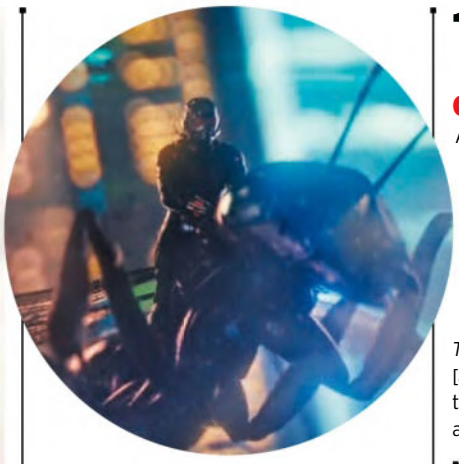
The Wasp Lives! (And Dies)

A relatively late addition to the movie saw the much talked-about Janet van Dyne (Hayley Lovitt), late wife of Hank Pym, make an appearance as his partner-in-microcosmic-crimefighting, the Wasp. "Her costume had to have a definite relationship to the Ant-Man costume, as Hank designed both of them," says Reed. "Janet was not in the original draft [*by Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish*], but I wanted her to be a presence in the movie."



Cut The Check!

As Scott embarks on a pre-heist heist, he swiftly realises he's accidentally targeted the New Avengers Facility (established in *Age Of Ultron*), and ends up embroiled in a battle with special-guest Avenger, Anthony Mackie's Falcon. "It was Rudd's idea," says Reed. "It felt like if he fought Thor or Iron Man or Hulk, it would take the movie too far in a different direction. And as a kid, you wonder who's going to win in a fight like this." The duo will reteam in *Captain America: Civil War*.



1.30.24

Adios, Antony

In quite frankly the single biggest death to hit the Marvel Cinematic Universe to date, Scott Lang's beloved insectisteed, Antony the ant, is blown away by a bullet. "We wanted to ask, 'Can we make an audience feel real emotion for the death of an ant, something you step on every day?'" It's a fair question, but nobody dies in comic book movies... right? "He's gone," confirms Reed.

1.40.54

Quantum Leaping

As Scott ventures into the infinitesimally small world of the Quantum Realm, prepare your peepers and ready those pausing fingers: is this the silhouette of Janet van Dyne, the original Wasp? Does this indicate that she's not dead, and that she can be saved? All will be revealed in the 2018 sequel, *Ant-Man And The Wasp*. "There's a generational thing [*about the title*]," says Reed. "It really talks about Scott and Hope, but could also be talking about Hank and Janet."

1.46.36

Stan The Man

The obligatory cameo of Marvel scion and *Ant-Man* co-creator Stan Lee comes near the end, where he plays the world's oldest bartender in a jazzy montage. "We shot that in The Smokehouse, a great, old steak restaurant right across from Warner Bros. It's the restaurant George Clooney named his production company after." Originally, Lee was meant to play a gambler in an underground den – a sequence that was never filmed.



Wasp 2.0

"About damn time," says Evangeline Lilly's Hope as she eyes the new and improved Wasp costume once built for her mother, now intended for her. It's a line that Reed intended to have an impact, as *Ant-Man And The Wasp* will see Hope become Marvel's first female hero to be mentioned in the title. "It's a long time coming," says Reed. "I cannot wait to see Evangeline put on the suit and kick ass. How she moves, how she fights, how she flies. She has some issues in this first movie – how will they be resolved in the second?"

ALSO OUT



Girlhood

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M**

DVD

Not a rushed-out Richard Linklater knock-off, Céline Sciamma's empathetic, powerful, almost documentary-like drama follows 16-year-old Marieme (a terrific Karidja Touré), a disenfranchised teen living on a Parisian estate who falls into a girl gang. Despite catfights and low-level crime, the film is at its best just hanging out with the girls detailing the joys and pains of female friendship. Things feel more generic when Marieme moves in with a local Mr. Big, but overall this is a gripping, non-judgmental look at a young girl finding herself in extremely tough circumstances.

EXTRAS None. IAN FREER



Tangerine

★★★★☆

DVD

FROM **DECEMBER 23** / RATED **MA15+**

It may be known as *The Movie Shot On An iPhone 5*, but Sean Baker's hymn to the spirit of the streets is more than that. Two transgender prostitutes, Sin-Dee and Alexandra (Kitana Kiki Rodriguez, Mya Taylor), strut up and down Santa Monica Boulevard searching for the truth about Sin-Dee's cheating pimp boyfriend, as randy Armenian cab driver Razmik (Karren Karagulian) becomes an increasingly important part of their odyssey. The filmmaking is electric, boasting the verve of a young Scorsese, but equally impressive are the performances, laughs and the sense of compassion towards the traditionally marginalised.

EXTRAS None. IF



Peter Firth and Kit Harington, noble members of House Shard.

Spooks: The Greater Good

★★★☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** / DIRECTOR **BHARAT NALLURI** / CAST **KIT HARINGTON, PETER FIRTH, JENNIFER EHLE, TIM MCINNERNY, TUPPENCE MIDDLETON, ELYES GABEL**

DVD BR

KEEPING THE BRITISH END UP



FROM THE HAMMER

Quatermass films of the 1950s through to macho spin-offs like the *Sweeney* movies of the '70s, there was once a strong tradition of bringing British TV hits to the big screen. Outside of comedy, which has yielded everything from *Dad's Army* to *Mrs. Brown's Boys D'Movie*, the form has tailed off lately… so this film follow-up to the 10-season post-millennial spy show is at once a pleasant revival of an old tradition and its reinvention.

The format of the original series allowed for a high turnover of cast as MI5 agents were introduced, subjected to a season or two of trauma and betrayal then killed off or written out. This means that unlike most TV spin-offs, the *Spooks* movie can't rely on the proven appeal of a star cast in their popular roles — among the regulars over the years have been David Oyelowo, Keeley Hawes, Matthew Macfadyen, Shauna Macdonald, Jenny Agutter, Sophia Myles, Richard Armitage and Rupert Penry-Jones, all busy elsewhere these days. By default, the script has to revolve around the sole continuing, surviving character, Peter Firth's Sir Harry Pearce, who is basically George Smiley with a smartphone. This might seem like extending the 007 franchise with a movie about M's day off, but it's actually the film's strongest suit. Firth, given a leading role and top billing, flashes the slow-burning charisma he's had ever since '70s TV show *Here Come The Double Deckers!*, while Pearce goes off the grid and improvises trickery and connivance on a hugely complex level to protect Queen and Country at any cost.

The downside is that newcomers have a hard time keeping up. Tim McInnerny (one of a few other performers reprising TV roles here), David Harewood and Jennifer Ehle are solid as backroom warriors, and Tuppence Middleton and Eleanor Matsuura bright sparks as new recruits. However, too much of the film boils down to Kit Harington and Elyes Gabel competing in their failure to sport proper beards. In theory the action-hero protagonist and the terrorist master villain, Harington and Gabel come across as sulky and ineffectual and the labyrinthine plot sidelines their clash in favour of a nebulous conspiracy.

Transfer from small to big screen allows for great use of London locations, with The Shard or the London Eye popping up outside every office window or covert meeting spot and very deft runabouts at Heathrow Airport and the National Theatre. Director Bharat Nalluri, an episodic TV professional whose eclectic film credits include *Miss Pettigrew Lives For A Day* and *The Crow: Salvation*, stages boardroom confrontations, street escapes, fights and plot twists expertly, but *The Greater Good* doesn't quite escape its small-scale origins… with a finale which takes place indoors, as if it were raining that day and they couldn't play outside.

EXTRAS Making-of, interviews.

KIM NEWMAN

Dope

★★★★☆

FROM **DECEMBER 17** / RATED **MA15+** / DIRECTOR **RICK FAMUYIWA** / CAST **SHAMEIK MOORE, KIERSEY CLEMONS, TONY REVOLORI**

DVD BR

SUPERFLY



The band were starving, but what to eat?



THERE IS SOMETHING of the early work of Danny Boyle about *Dope*. Like *Shallow Grave* or *Trainspotting*, writer-director Rick Famuyiwa's whirling dervish of a film is funny, irreverent and pop culturally aware, mixing up drama and comedy, styles and genres with gleeful abandon. It gets bogged down a bit in its final act but for most of its running time, *Dope* is an exhilarating shot of adrenaline.

Set in a crime-infested LA neighbourhood nicknamed The Bottoms, *Dope* invokes the spirit of *Boyz N The Hood*-style dramas but immediately goes its own way. The teen Nigerian-American hero, Malcolm (Shameik Moore) is a straight-A geeky student, devoted to "shit white people like" — skateboards, Donald Glover, manga, going to Harvard — and his friends, mouthy Jib (Tony Revolori) and mellow lesbian Diggy (Kiersey Clemons). Immediately you like these kids, be they rocking out in punk band Awreeoh (say it out loud) or debating masturbation, Famuyiwa keeping things light but the skewering of what the character specs traditionally are for young, black protagonists remains pointed.

Soon Malcolm's attraction to equally bright Nakia (Zoë Kravitz in charming mode) leads him to a club, a shooting and a getaway with a bag full of MDMA. At this point, the film turns into a lively caper flick, full of incident, twists and turns, all parlayed into playful filmmaking flair. Best known for 1999's *The Wood*, Famuyiwa has so much to say but he interweaves his concerns with a light touch that never feels laboured.

In the end, perhaps the film suffers from a surfeit of ideas. The gang's scheme to get rid of the drugs, which smacks of a *Risky Business*-style form of entrepreneurial spirit, has so much detail, it dissipates the verve. Some of the comic cameos feel as if they go on too long. But as US indies go, this is a colourful, energetic delight that has the feel of a great mixtape. Plus it introduces a breakout star in Shameik Moore, sporting cinema's best flattop since Kid met Play.

EXTRAS None. IF



The Gift

★★★★☆

FROM **DECEMBER 30** / RATED **M**

DVD BR

A smarmy douchebag-with-a-question-mark. A socially unnerved schoolmate from his past with a mysterious score to settle. Virgin auteur Joel Edgerton far exceeds expectations with this lean, whistling kettle of a Hitchcockian thriller that skirts the edges of pulp while never disappearing into the preposterous. Edgerton's created a rare beast that ticks every cinematic box: fine performances, complex characters, deft writing and direction, moral ambiguity, and relevant themes. *The Gift* is a genuinely satisfying experience that trusts its genre conventions and mechanics. Aussie filmmakers take note, there's a (relatively) new kid in town.

EXTRAS Deleted scenes, featurettes, more.

JEREMY CASSAR



Filmed In Supermarionation

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **PG**

DVD BR

Long before the Ricky Gervais mockumentary *The Office* made it famous, Slough was making televisual history through AP Films, which transformed small-screen entertainment for kids between 1957-'70 with puppet shows that really crested the sci-fi wave. Ironically, Gerry Anderson, the brains behind them, despised the form and developed the pioneering techniques used on *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds* and *Captain Scarlet* to atone for the fact he wasn't directing live-action movies. Survivors of his teams are prouder of their work, however, and aficionados will relish this mix of clips, gossip and nostalgia.

EXTRAS Deleted scenes, SFX reel, behind-the-scenes, featurettes, more.

DAVID PARKINSON



Manglehorn

★★★☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M**

DVD BR

Al Pacino goes deep and disdains eccentricity as small-town Texas locksmith A. J. Manglehorn, a loner obsessed with a long-lost love and coldly, angrily stuck in the past. The rest of the film, from *Pineapple Express* man David Gordon Green, has more than enough quirk, thanks, including an inexplicable street mime, in a largely downbeat character study with flashes of humour. A warm Holly Hunter as a spinster bank clerk with a crush on A. J. goes toe-to-toe nicely with the superbly understated Pacino but the most involving relationship in the film is Manglehorn's with his beloved, ailing cat Fanny. If only the dreary narrative was as developed as the central performance.

EXTRAS None. ANGIE ERRIGO

ALSO OUT



The Man From U.N.C.L.E.

★★★☆☆ DVD BR UV

FROM **DECEMBER 16** / RATED **M**

The much-loved 1960s crime series receives a 21st-century reboot, courtesy of *Sherlock Holmes* director Guy Ritchie. Unfortunately for Ritchie (and us), Henry Cavill and Armie Hammer are bland and forgettable compared with Robert Downey Jr. (not to mention their 1960s U.N.C.L.E.s, Robert Vaughn and David McCallum). And so, what should have been a delightful, entertaining, sharply observed espionage romp is instead a mildly engaging caper, stylishly dressed but lacking in depth. Alicia Vikander remains a treat, while Hugh Grant steals the show from the leads with ease. **EXTRAS** Blu-ray only featurettes, more.

ED GIBBS



Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** DVD BR

Must be something in the spy franchise air: Just as *Spectre* saw 007's existence questioned, so too *Rogue Nation* has the IMF grilled for its antiquated methods. Both tangle with shadowy threats to global security, but where Bond furrowed his brow, *M:I 5* delivers a sparkling globetrotter that goes from strength (that plane opening) to strength (an underwater vault heist.) Chris McQuarrie does arguably the best instalment since De Palma, crafting an elegant thriller that resurrects the series' escapist intrigue, while 20 years into the gig Cruise feels more like the last superstar than ever. **EXTRAS** Featurettes. **LUKE GOODSELL**



Game of lives: Ethan Hawke's former pilot takes aim.

Good Kill

★★★★☆

FROM **DECEMBER 30** / RATED **M** / DIRECTOR **ANDREW NICCOL** / CAST **ETHAN HAWKE, JANUARY JONES, ZOË KRAVITZ, BRUCE GREENWOOD**

DVD BR

FULL METAL CONSOLE



RIPPED FROM THE headlines, *Good Kill* is as terrifying as it is timely. Reuniting with his *Gattaca* compadre Ethan Hawke, writer-director Andrew Niccol drills into the moral and psychological murk of drone warfare with a cool head and a tight grip. Here the filmmaker is cleaving to his previous sci-fi vibes (the dystopian feel of *Gattaca*, the omnipotent surveillance of *The Truman Show*) but locating it firmly in the here and now, making it painfully clear that death by joystick is no longer the province of the PlayStation 4.

The movie is at its best in the hothouse environment of the bland drone cubicles. Early on, *Good Kill* is so forensic and fascinating about detailing the process of remote strikes that by the end of the movie you feel like you could tackle one yourself. This pays dividends when Hawke's pilot Thomas Egan is co-opted to fly missions under orders from the CIA (the cold, disembodied voice on the phone is that of Peter Coyote) as the off-the-record missions and practices become increasingly dubious. The cool, calm routine we've become accustomed to takes on a more tense, sinister edge.

Hawke, on a roll after *Boyhood* and *Predestination*, is terrific. In green fatigues and Aviator glasses, Egan is Maverick past his prime, wrestling with the after-effects of modern warfare now the thrill and immediacy of actual combat have been taken away. Hawke makes his slide from hard-as-nails military type to self-loathing wreck believable and affecting. January Jones plays effective riffs on her housewife-in-meltdown mode from *Mad Men* and Zoë Kravitz is a sparky presence as Egan's equally troubled co-pilot.

Some of it feels over-egged; a sub-plot concerning Egan's involvement with a victimised villager is a tad trite, but for the most part it is a model of tact and complexity. Niccol keeps political posturings to a minimum and is alive to the thin line dividing so-called terrorists and so-called peacekeepers. For a film about the distancing effect of technology, it keeps things very human.

EXTRAS Blu-ray only behind-the-scenes, featurettes, more.

IAN FREER

Last Cab To Darwin

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** / DIRECTOR **JEREMY SIMS** / CAST **MICHAEL CATON, JACKI WEAVER**

DVD BR

THAT'S 10M BUCKS, THANKS



LAST CAB TO DARWIN split critics (usually on generational lines; we gave it a measly two stars) thanks to some clichéd Auscinema ingredients: Michael Caton, postcard outback picaresque, mouthy indigenous larrikins, earthy humour amid sadness, cute dog. Of course, the public loves that stuff: it did almost $10m at the Australian box office.

But Jeremy Sims's third feature finds moments to breathe between the hoary standards, making palms-up and frank observations on white-aboriginal relations, love and Australian machismo. The answers are individual and not always immediate — like the questions posed by the euthanasia debate at the film's centre — but nor should they be. And the resulting film, still aiming for Bruce Public's heart, is more intriguing for it.

Caton gives the most immersive performance of his long career as Rex, the terminally ill Broken Hill cabbie who drives to Darwin to take advantage of the recently passed euthanasia law. There's no Darryl Kerrigan here, Caton's loner-curmudgeon Rex is a magnetic mix of rural resignation and subterranean regret. He should land his Best Actor AACTA nomination. Similarly nominated (the film has eight in all), Ningali Lawford is equal parts hilarity and soulful pragmatist as Polly; all the players bring life to Reg Cribbs's script, which is both matter-of-fact and aspirational about the variances in Aboriginal experience.

After a diabolical 2014, Australian audiences have rewarded a broadening tone, several films (*Paper Planes*, *The Water Diviner*, *The Dressmaker* and *Oddball*) have each earned around $10m locally. And all are family fare with heart. *Last Cab*'s family is thrown together, and the journey to where the heart is is deft enough to transcend the tropes while exploiting their appeal.

EXTRAS Making-of. DANIEL MURPHY



"Do I look like I want the pool room?"



Fantastic Four

★★★☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** DVD BR UV

Going down as 2015's biggest flop and arriving with more baggage than a dozen airports (the BTS tales of director Josh Trank's mercurial behaviour would make a killer tell-all tome), *Fantastic Four* is neither as good as it should be nor as terrible as everyone would have you believe. The first two-thirds' grounded sci-fi works and sports great interplay between the cast (Miles Teller, Kate Mara et al.). It's all jettisoned for a truly terrible finale that feels tacked on, a CGI clusterfuck that is as misguided as it is nonsensical. A shame when what precedes shows glimmers of being, ahem, fantastic.

EXTRAS Featurettes, more. JJ



Elstree 1976

★★☆☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **PG** DVD

Biggs! Fixer! Leesub Sirln! The stormtrooper who banged his head! Affectionate doco *Elstree 1976* celebrates the *Star Wars* characters that time forgot, the actors and extras that became *Star Wars* figures but only found real fame on the convention scene. A cracking idea on paper, director Jon Spira's talking heads ooze enthusiasm and likeability but their stories are in dire need of an edit. A bitter Dave Prowse (Darth Vader) and Jeremy Bullock (Boba Fett) add spice and the hierarchy of the autograph collecting circuit amuses but don't expect any on-set revelations.

EXTRAS None. DAVID MICHAEL BROWN



Believe Me

★★★★☆

OUT **NOW** / RATED **M** DVD

Master bullshitter Sam (a brilliant Alex Russell) needs some fast cash so reels in his mates to scam the lucrative market of Christian charity donations. Sure, it's a despicable notion but this rakish 'God Squad' satire is as sharp as it is merciless in its skewering of both Christians and wealthy evangelical movements – all "smoke machines, hipster fashions, fair trade coffee." You know, rhymes with Schmillsong. That's not to say it's fair, but moral-fallout does come in this thoughtful rather than preachy comedy about what it means to be true to your convictions.

EXTRAS None. JIM MITCHELL



True Story

★★☆☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M**

True Story is based on a... um... true story. Just not a believable one. Director Goold and David Kajganich's shallow, dramatically inert screenplay leaves three Oscar winners stranded. Jonah Hill and James Franco's offbeat casting is diverting, at first, as Hill's disgraced *New York Times* journalist, Mike Finkel, delves into the story of Franco's accused killer. But their psychological brinksmanship score a D-minus on the Lecter and Starling tension test, and Franco's mannered performance grates. Felicity Jones's role as Finkle's girlfriend may have been written on clear cellophane.

EXTRAS None. JOHN CATANIA



Knock Knock

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **MA15+** /
DIRECTOR **ELI ROTH** / CAST **KEANU REEVES, LORENZA IZZO, ANA DE ARMAS, AARON BURNS**

DVD BR

THE JAPES OF ROTH



IF *FIFTY SHADES OF Grey* opened the door to the return of the sexploitation movie, Eli Roth's latest thriller is more *Fatal Attraction* than E. L. James's *9 1/2 Weeks*-style take. Cast perfectly against type, Keanu Reeves stars as Evan, a likable suburban dad whose work commitments prevent him joining his wife and kids on a weekend away. Late at night, two beautiful femmes fatales — Bel (Ana de Armas) and Genesis (Lorenza Izzo) — ring the doorbell, claiming to be lost. Following some initial flirting from the women (bending over provocatively, waxing lyrical about Evan's vinyl collection) the scene is set for a raunchy game of cat and mouse, with Keeves as the adorably incredulous prey and Roth trading gore for suspense as playful seduction leads to armageddon.
EXTRAS Featurettes, more.
DAVID WILKINSON

He hadn't received the white robe memo.

ALSO OUT



Turbo Kid

★★★☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **MA15+** DVD BR

Finally, a kids' adventure romp fused with post-apocalyptic horror. The titular hero (Munro Chambers) is a tow-headed teen just trying to get by; Michael "*Total Recall*" Ironside plays baddie Zeus. With astonishing levels of limb-lopping gore, recalling Peter Jackson during his splattery early days, and a pastel-hued android, this offers nostalgia-tinged fun, and a thumping electro soundtrack that would get John Carpenter's toes tapping, but it's less funny than it should be and is further compromised by an uneven tone.
EXTRAS None.
HELEN O'HARA

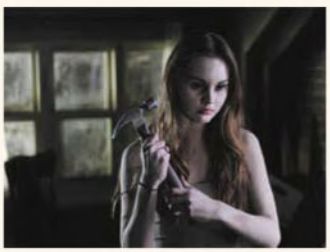


Pay The Ghost

★★☆☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** DVD BR

Blending *Poltergeist*, *Village Of The Damned* and *Finding Nemo* (minus the fish), director Uli Edel's lacklustre supernatural thriller stars a sombre Nicolas Cage as a father desperately trying to uncover the truth about his son's abduction during a Halloween parade. Edel has proven himself with euro hits like *Christine F.* and *The Baader Meinhof Complex* but here, saddled with a lazy script, based on Tim Lebbon's short story, and a lead determined to sleepwalk through his twilight years, he fails to generate the fraught emotion that the material demands.
EXTRAS Making-of. **DANNY MACKENZIE**



Haunt

★☆☆☆☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **MA15+** DVD BR

The only interesting thing here is the title card, reminding us the word 'Haunt' means a regular feeding place for animals, not that the definition has any bearing on what follows. Harrison Gilbertson and family move into a cursed house vacated by Jacki Weaver, with the teen and his troubled girl-next-door plagued by background apparitions, foreground blurs, old photo montages, brown sounds and EVP ju-ju that causes CGI black spider-vein possession. Despite its Aussie stars, this is a US indie possessed by cliches and so underlit it'd qualify as radio.
EXTRAS None. **MICHAEL ADAMS**



German Angst

★★★★☆

FROM **NOW** / RATED **R18+** DVD BR

Three of Germany's most controversial directors join forces in a bleak portmanteau that is equal parts art film, social comment and bloodthirsty rage. Jörg Buttgereit, the director of the notorious *Nekromantik* films, gives us castration, decapitation and a cute guinea pig in chapter *Final Girl*. Next, Michal Kosakowski (*Zero Killed*) pits a mute couple against a gang of neo-Nazi hooligans in *Make-A-Wish*. Finally, Andreas Marschall (*Masks*) visits a trippy sex club. Unflinching in its grim portrayal of love, sex and death, this is a brutal scream of a movie.
EXTRAS None. **DMB**



Inside Out

★★★★★

FROM **NOW** / RATED **PG** / DIRECTOR **PETE DOCTER, RONNIE DEL CARMEN** / CAST **AMY POEHLER, BILL HADER, LEWIS BLACK**

DVD BR

JOY STORY



WE HAVE COME TO expect the bowling-ball gleam of Pixar's multiverse — all those exquisite details, such as the way in this, its latest release, Joy's skin fizzes like freshly poured champagne. Start it anywhere, and it takes just seconds to figure out that this film originates from the Emeryville dream factory. What surprises you about high-end Pixar projects like *Inside Out* are the ideas.

After taking a year to regroup following a lapse into relative mediocrity with *Cars 2*, *Brave* and *Monsters University*, Pete Docter's fantastic voyage into the brain of crisis-struck, 11-year-old Riley is a reaffirmation of Pixar's core magic — storytelling ingenuity. Riley's consciousness is essentially the bridge of a human starship, erratically piloted by five primary emotions, beyond which her mind becomes a fading theme park where Riley's childhood is slipping away. It is literally an imaginary place.

On the charming commentary, hosted by Docter and co-director Ronnie Del Carmen, there is much discussion of "invisible story elements". It is a search, Docter insists, for "what is authentic". Sure, it has the standard Pixar OS — an odd couple (svelte Joy and squat Sadness) figuring out a way home — but the calibration of emotion took months of scrutiny. Amy Poehler was pivotal in preventing Joy's unflagging positivity from becoming a drag. John Lasseter had been overheard grumbling, "I really don't like Joy."

The relationship between "inside" and "outside" worlds was incredibly tricky to envisage. 'Cinematography' was key: the outer world is given a shaky Steadicam look; inside Riley the 'camera' is "on a tripod". "I was inspired by Kurosawa," mentions DP Patrick Lin. Later, Docter points out a shot, as the human heroine steals from her mother's purse, lifted entirely from Hitchcock's *Marnie*. Pixar are serious filmmakers.

EXTRAS Commentary, making-of, deleted scenes, more. IAN NATHAN

Above: A glass case of emotions in *Inside Out*.
Below: Producer Jonas Riviera.



BONUS FEATURE

INSIDE SECRETS

INSIDE OUT PRODUCER JONAS RIVERIA ON THE MANY VERSIONS OF THE FILM THAT COULD'VE BEEN

"THERE WERE SEVERAL VERSIONS OF THE film before it finished production, and at one point it was Joy and Fear teaming up, not Joy and Sadness. For all the films we do, we build story reels, storyboards, kinda write the screenplay out. Pete [*Docter, director*] even said, 'I like to find movies as opposed to make them.' I think that speaks to his level of collaboration.

"So we took the concepts, and always knew it would be about this little girl doing something, but there were so many versions of the external stakes of what she should be going through. We had versions of the movie where she wasn't even moving. We had one of whether or not she sat at the right seat in school, inside her mind and how the emotions deal with that. It was funny but not deep enough. The version with Fear we thought was very right, because a lot of us being in Junior High with stories of it being fear-based, you're trying to fit in. Maybe this is specific with people in animation, not necessarily the football players or the heroes of the school! We had a lot of personal stories on the story table that led us to that.

"And then I think as we started putting the movie together, it was really Pete who said that this plays out in an entertaining way and it kinda holds water as a story but it doesn't really lead to a punchline where Joy has to learn anything. He had this great epiphany where he said that really the two opposing emotions are Joy and Sadness; Sadness is the one that Joy wouldn't understand. As he said that I even thought of myself as a parent with my three young kids and I literally say 'don't be sad', almost like a command to them, which to them would be completely almost inappropriate. You can't tell someone not to feel something.

"So all of a sudden, that idea started to make sense, it felt a little more dramatic, it felt like it was a little bit deeper in an emotional well. We were pretty far along so we had to explain it to ourselves a little bit, realign the storytelling and it kind of fell into place after that, and it was a good idea. That was a big day for us."

JAMES JENNINGS

The Psycho Collection

★★★★★

FROM **NOW** / RATED **R18+** / DIRECTORS **ALFRED HITCHCOCK, RICHARD FRANKLIN, ANTHONY PERKINS, MICK GARRIS, RICHARD ROTHSTEIN, GUS VAN SANT** / CAST **ANTHONY PERKINS, JANET LEIGH, VERA MILES, MEG TILLY, VINCE VAUGHN**

DVD BR

MUM'S THE WORD



WHO ON EARTH would make a sequel to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*? Even Hitch, no stranger (on a train) to remaking his own films with *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, avoided the sequel route but, as proven with this essential collection (the original, three sequels, a TV movie and a remake), his tense 1960 classic of monochrome matricide's legacy has been well handled.

Aussie Richard Franklin, a student of Hitchcock and the director of Ozploitation classics *Patrick* and *Road Games*, was given the unenviable task of taking the reins on the first sequel, *Psycho II* (1983). With a sharp, witty script by Tom Holland, the film sees a delightfully twitchy Anthony Perkins, in the role he made famous, returning to the Bates Motel after 22 years in psychiatric care and trying to go straight. The problem is that Lila Loomis (*Psycho* veteran Vera Miles, having a ball) and her daughter Mary (a young Meg Tilly) try to send him right back. The film brilliantly plays on audience expectations and ends with a delicious, black twist.



Not the time for vogueing, Norman.

After this auspicious start the law of diminishing returns does kick in, but there is still plenty to enjoy. *Psycho III* (1986) sees Perkins return as the world's most famous mummy's boy, make his directorial debut and give himself a love interest, albeit a fallen nun (Diana Scarwid) who makes "mother" jealous.

The 1987 *Bates Motel* television movie is a curio, and the first without Perkins, that takes a different tack as *Harold And Maude*'s Bud Cort plays Bates's lunatic asylum roommate who inherits the Bates Motel. No clues guessing what happens. *Psycho IV* (1990), made for Showtime, heralded the return of Perkins and the original *Psycho* scripter Joseph Stefano and stars E.T.'s bestie Henry Thomas as a young Norman Bates in flashback. Which finally leads us screaming to Gus Van Sant's pointless, Vince Vaughn starring, 1998 remake; a shot-for-shot experiment that fails on almost every level. It is the weak link in an otherwise worthy collection of successors.

EXTRAS Includes the excellent feature length doco *The Psycho Legacy* on two packed discs of extras. **DMB**

ALSO OUT



Christmas Evil

★★☆☆☆

1980 / FROM **NOW** / RATED **M** BR

Kid sees mother copping off with Santa on Christmas Eve; kid grows up to be a disturbed, Yuletide-obsessed psycho who spies on the neighbourhood kids to see who's naughty and nice, makes creepy toys and indulges in other assorted weirdness. It's grindhouse schlock through and through, replete with cheap synth score, woeful acting and a nebulous grasp of pacing, but there are several so-bad-it's-good laughs (an array of Santas in a police line-up; a stellar closing shot of a van sailing past the moon like Santa's sleigh). An Xmas gift for trash lovers. **EXTRAS** A Santa sackful: interviews, commentary, deleted scenes, deluxe booklet and more. **JAMES JENNINGS**

Eaten Alive!

★★★☆☆

1977 /FROM **NOW** / RATED **R18+** / DIRECTOR **TOBE HOOPER** / CAST **NEVILLE BRAND, MEL FERRER, CAROLYN JONES, MARILYN BURNS**

BR

HEART RAKE HOTEL



"I HOPE YOU ENJOY the colours," drawls Tobe Hooper in the intro to the Blu-ray release of his follow up to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* feature. Using caustic red and eerie blue lighting (a year before *Suspiria*) — along with the unnerving polyphonic sound design that made *TTCSM* so indelible — Hooper heightens the nightmarish, hallucinogenic weirdness of this trashy riff on *Psycho*, where gibbering East Texas hotelier Judd (Neville Brand) carves up guests with farming tools before feeding them to his pet alligator.

Eaten Alive! needed more dough, and it's utterly nuts, but there is style to burn. The second half is particularly gripping; one sequence cuts between a child screaming in hiding under the hotel, her mum (*TTCSM* alumnus Marilyn Burns is just one exploitation regular in the cast) writhing in terror while gagged and tied to a bed, a pacing, gurning Judd, and a couple heavy petting (featuring a young Robert Englund) in one of the rooms: the audience's emotions are scrambled. The Blu-ray transfer is tasty and the extras are plentiful, thanks to distributor Glass Doll Films, who are Blu-ing a swag of grindhouse titles. Fans will be satisfied. **EXTRAS** Interviews, doco on the true crime inspiration, deluxe booklet, more. **DANIEL MURPHY**



Clara (Roberta Collins) really overdoes it at the hotel buffet.

"Michael's not great on treats, but full of tricks."







Halloween

1978 / RATED **R18+** / DIRECTOR **JOHN CARPENTER** / CAST **DONALD PLEASENCE, JAMIE LEE CURTIS, TONY MORAN**

DVD BR

KNIFE AND DEATH

***HALLOWEEN* IS OFTEN VIEWED AS A** beginning: the moment a new type of horror arrived to brush away the genre's cobwebs. This isn't exactly true. It was released in the same year as *Dawn Of The Dead*; a year after *The Hills Have Eyes*; and four years after *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. George Romero, Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper and David Cronenberg were already making horror in-roads while Carpenter put together a loopy sci-fi (*Dark Star*) and a lo-fi thriller (*Assault On Precinct 13*). *Halloween* saw Carpenter join a peer group with which he'd soon be forever associated, but he didn't get there first.

Halloween isn't even the first slasher film (not least because there's barely any slashing and practically no blood). *Black Christmas* probably has that honour, although the sub-genre's roots are in *Psycho*, *giallo* and the splatter films of Herschell Gordon Lewis. Even Hammer had played with proto-slasher tropes in the *Mummy's Tomb* films and *Hands Of The Ripper*. Those progenitors, though, were often whodunnits. *Halloween* reveals its murderer in the first scene, and is one of the first films in which the killer is barely explained. We'd had cannibal clans, serial killers, zombies and ancient Egyptians, but Michael Myers, despite having a name, is conceived more or less as simply an entity. In the credits he's listed only as The Shape.

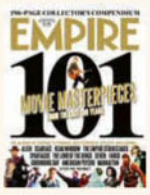
Donald Pleasence — cast as the elder statesman in a film full of new faces (Christopher Lee turned it down) — told Carpenter he didn't understand the screenplay. You can sympathise. On paper, Myers makes little sense. Having spent much of his childhood and all of his adolescence in an asylum, he nevertheless knows how to drive and has the ability to knock out phone lines. Over the course of the film he is blinded, stabbed and shot, seemingly to no effect, despite his being set up as explicitly not supernatural. In the film's dialogue he is much talked about, but the premise is about who he is, not *what* he is. In his boiler suit and Shatner mask, he seems to arrive fully formed: both twisted man-child and elemental boogeyman. The sequels will pick endlessly over his true nature — he's Laurie's brother; he's the product of a mad druidic cult; he's haunted and controlled by his dead mother and his younger self — but the original *Halloween*'s purity is that Michael Myers just *is*. "The evil has escaped," says Dr. Loomis. Evil is enough.

So, it's easy to miss that there are actually establishing scenes for the outfit and the face. The overalls have come from the unfortunate owner of the Phelps Garage truck that Pleasence finds abandoned. The mask comes from a break-in at a hardware store that stocks Halloween gear (although that seems to happen after we've already glimpsed Michael in full kit). There's also an element in this original film that the sequels barely, if ever, pick up on or run with. October 31 is important, not just as a Myers anniversary and a date for the carnage, but for the character of Michael himself. Throughout this film, he's a prankster: not great on the treats front, but certainly full of tricks. He hides in a cupboard, plays dead, dresses in a sheet. "It's Halloween: everyone's entitled to one good scare," says Sheriff Brackett. Michael obviously agrees. He even sets his victims up in gruesome tableaux with his murdered sister's headstone. Surprise!

Counter-intuitively, it's these oddities that make the film bite. Superficially a straightforward affair — Carpenter says its pure simplicity was key — the film gets stranger the deeper you dig. Why does Loomis visit the graveyard? Just how big is Haddonfield? Critics have looked for meaning and metaphor, reaching for rot at the heart of suburbia (later the underbelly of *Elm Street*) or the fact that the promiscuous girls die first. But these theories are awkwardly mapped onto a film that determinedly provides no answers. Jamie Lee Curtis's unusual 'final girl', for instance, doesn't have sex during the movie, but is as interested in boys as her friends (the object of her affection, Ben Tramer, singularly fails to get lucky in *Halloween II*). And while she appears frumpy on the surface, she's rebellious enough to smoke weed in the car, and we're given no sense that it's under peer pressure.

So don't approach *Halloween* expecting sense. Do expect suspense. The pace is measured, with long, quiet sequences and lengthy walks and drives. Each moment is stretched as long as possible. Even the best scares are muted: there's no fanfare on the soundtrack when Myers sits up behind Curtis, and no sound at all as he stares at a hanging corpse like a baleful hound. There are no elaborate kills here. Just a prowling Panaglide camera rig and a few tinkering notes from a Moog Modular III. When you're John Carpenter, that's all you need. **OWEN WILLIAMS**

1 Jamie Lee Curtis's first film role, as Laurie Strode, made her a scream queen for life.
2 Mike Myers AKA The Shape with his iconic Shatner mask and kitchen knife.
3 Donald Pleasence as wise doctor Sam Loomis.



For more authoritative, insightful and downright masterful *Empire* masterpieces, pick up a copy of *Empire's 101 Movie Masterpieces*.

Gilliamesque: A Pre-Posthumous Memoir

★★★★☆

AUTHOR **TERRY GILLIAM** / OUT **NOW**

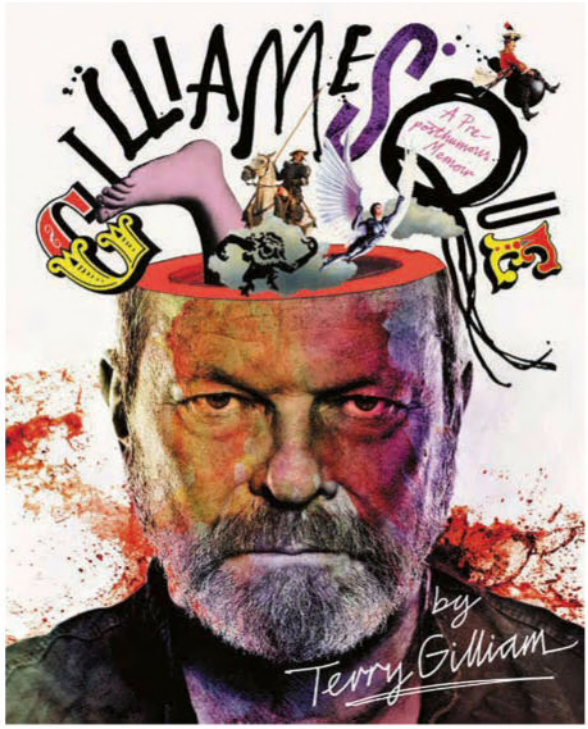
BLABBERWOCKY

ON TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8, *Variety* announced the death of director, artist and comedian Terry Gilliam. The next day, Gilliam posted an apology for his expiration on Facebook, urging people not to believe *Variety*'s "retraction", and included a mocked-up photo of himself in deathly repose, with a spooky-faced widow holding a sign over him saying, "He was only 30! Bad reviews from *Variety* aged him!"

Which should give a pretty good indication of what to expect from Gilliam's "pre-posthumous" memoir. Blissfully free of misty-eyed reminiscence — instead packed with wry commentary and cheeky wordplay — it is also festooned with his art and photos, plus scrawled margin notes and self-effacing captions. All of which is presented in a handsome hardback which has "ME ME ME ME" stamped in red all over the fore edge. Throughout, he apologises for the egocentric nature of the entire project, but you know he loves it.

Gilliam is brutally honest about the book's origin in an opening "Warning". It was supposed to be a "large, expensive, high-class coffee-table book" of his artwork. Instead, he got too into his Dictaphone-"babbling" and turned it into a "*Grand Theft Auto*-biography: a high-speed car chase through my life with lots of skids and crashes, many of the best moments whizzing by in a blur." It's an apt description. He whirls from his rural Minnesotan childhood, to his years as a high-achieving Hollywood high-schooler, to his New York journo days, to his emigration to England, to Python, to his rise as one of the world's most exciting directors, to the collapse of his Don Quixote film, to last year's Python reunion, to his thoughts on (actual) death without taking a single narrative breath.

To be fair, he's aware that plenty has been written about him in the past (see below), and feels no need to go over well-scuffed ground. Which means there's more here on his lesser-known early years than, say, his tussle with Universal's Sid Sheinberg over his masterpiece *Brazil*. Sometimes you wish he'd stick to a subject for longer, as fun as it is riding his recollective torrent. Still, there's no denying that, for a filmmaker who already has a shelf's worth of books devoted to him, it's a joy to finally have one entirely scribbled by the man himself. **DAN JOLIN**



Terry Gilliam: not dead, just a bit of a headache.

FURTHER READING

WHOLLY TERRY-ER. MORE ON FILM'S MOST ECLECTIC GENIUS



The Battle Of Brazil (Jack Mathews)
Superb, in-depth account of Gilliam's fight to save his creative vision from studio fuck-uppery.



Dark Knights & Holy Fools (Terry Gilliam, Bob McCabe)
A luxurious hardback film-by-film, with a focus on art and design.



Dreams And Nightmares (Terry Gilliam, Bob McCabe)
A warts-and-more-warts diary of *The Brothers Grimm*. Brother, does it get grim.

ALSO OUT

Back To The Future: The Ultimate Visual History

★★★★★

AUTHORS **MICHAEL KLASTORIN, RANDAL ATAMANIUK** / OUT **NOW**



The title does not lie: *Back To The Future* superfans are gifted the ultimate insider look at the *BTTF* trilogy with this lavish book that covers all stages of production and interviews with all the key cast and crew. Best of all are the removable inserts: the dust jacket for George McFly's novel *A Match Made In Space*, the poster for Max Spielberg's *Jaws 19* and a stack more. Expect it to, ahem, McFly off the shelves. **JAMES JENNINGS**

Crimson Peak: The Art Of Darkness

★★★★☆

AUTHOR **MARK SALISBURY** / OUT **NOW**



If there's one thing you can rely upon from Guillermo del Toro, a man who takes his sketchbook everywhere, it's breathtaking art. And the sumptuous *Crimson Peak* doesn't disappoint. This excellent, erm, peek inside del Toro's gloriously Gothic designs, is like taking a walk through the mind of the maestro himself. Bloody beautiful. **CH**

Alien Next Door

★★★☆☆

AUTHOR **JOEY SPIOTTO** / OUT **NOW**



Illustrator Joey Spiotto's thing is taking pop-culture phenoms and reimagining them as kids' book covers. Encouraged by H.R. Giger's positive response to his fake effort *Facehugs For Everyone*, he created a real picture book featuring the Alien as a cute character who breakfasts on 'Promethe-Os' and plays 'Whac-A-Grunt'. Twisted fun. **DJ**

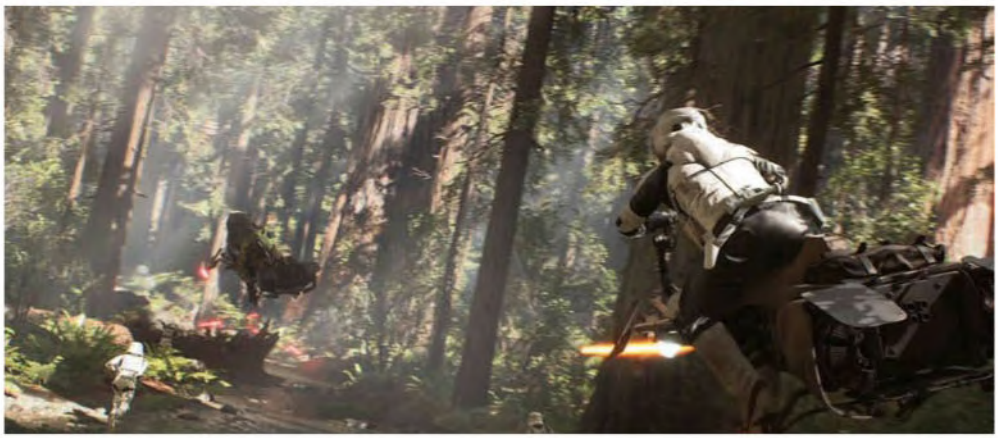


Star Wars Battlefront

★★★☆☆

OUT **NOW / PS4, XBOX ONE, PC**

SHOOT FIRST



IT'S A FANTASTIC YEAR TO BE A fan of the original *Star Wars* films. With J.J. Abrams behind the controls of the X-wings of *Episode VII*, we've been treated to trailers that capture the nostalgia of the first three movies almost shot-for-shot, giving fans a new hope for *The Force Awakens*. And now we have *Star Wars Battlefront*, an online multiplayer shooter that ignores the newer prequel films, recreating the epic battles of Endor and Hoth with up to 40 people online. The Force initially appears very strong in this one… provided you're not a serious gamer.

While there are a few basic singleplayer modes, *Battlefront* is all about playing online in a giant sandbox filled with all of the *Star Wars* toys you treasured as a child. Whether it's zipping through the giant trees of Endor on a speeder-bike, or stomping puny rebels with your AT-ST walker on Hoth, the absolutely incredible graphics capture the look of the originals perfectly. This is undoubtedly the best looking game ever made, and at times you'll think you're playing an interactive movie. All of the iconic sound effects of the originals are included, and the first time you hear the chest-rattling whump of a thermal detonator is sure to bring a smile to your face.

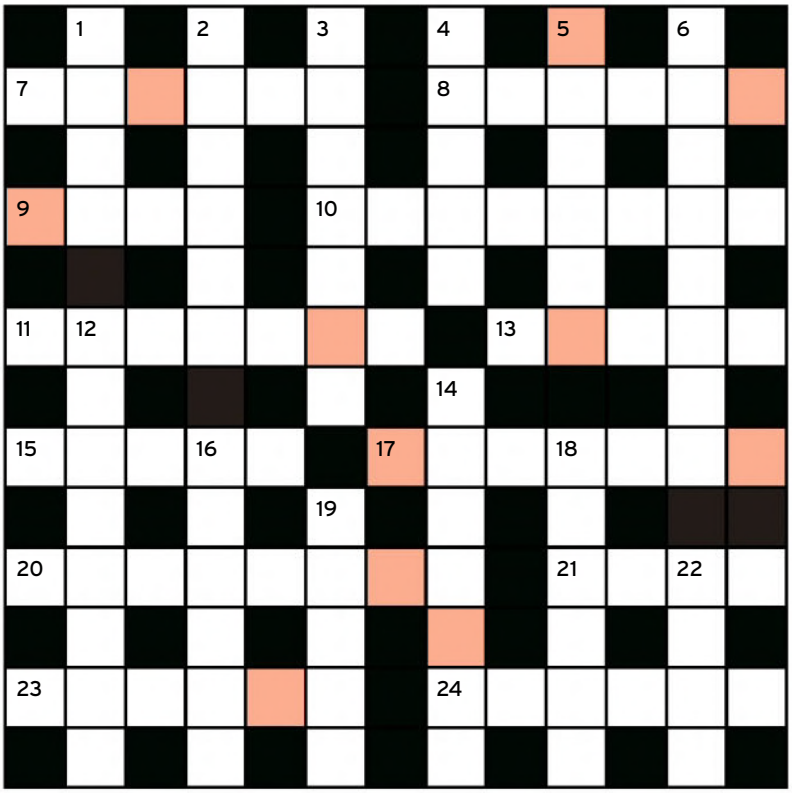
There's a whopping nine different online modes included, but most are overly simplistic versions of the classics found elsewhere — deathmatch, capture the flag, and so on. The real meat of this game is the Walker mode, a 20 vs 20 scrap that sees the Empire escorting giant AT-AT walkers across huge levels, while the Rebels try to bring them down with infantry, Y-wing and Snowspeeder attacks. Glowing icons pop up across the levels that let you take control of a vehicle or, if you're really lucky, a hero character — Darth Vader, Boba Fett and Han Solo are three of the six included.

It sure looks good, but after a few hours it becomes apparent that in aiming for a very wide audience, *Battlefront* lacks the depth of more serious shooters such as *Call Of Duty* or *Battlefield*. Weapons all feel remarkably similar, and the infantry combat often devolves into who shot first (pun intended), not who is the most skilful player. There's also a real lack of content here — with just four levels for the main Walker mode, EA is banking on players spending the extra $70 or so for the season pass on top of the game price, which will unlock four expansion packs over the next year. Even casual gamers will likely tire of playing the same maps over and over again, but for the first dozen hours or so, *Battlefront* is the closest you've ever come to stepping into your favourite *Star Wars* battle. Sadly that experience begins to fade over time, thanks to overly simplistic and repetitive gameplay.

BENNETT RING

Top: Vader unleashes hell on the local Ewok populance. **Above:** Speeder-bikes tear through the trees.

THE *EMPIRE* CROSSWORD



ACROSS

7 "Meet the only guy who changes his identity more often than his underwear" ran the promo tag (6)
8 Oddly, this Jessica Biel starrer was mainly set in New York (6)
9 Moore discovered amid Dirk Bogarde-Michael Caine link (4)
10 See **22 DOWN**
11 Shakespeare classic which featured Laurence Fishburne in the title role (7)
13 Brad Pitt's kind of onscreen club (5)
15 This 1974 release starred Dustin Hoffman and was directed by Bob Fosse (5)
17 Hammer horror hero Peter (7)
20 Guidance provided by Billy Crystal and Bette Midler (8)
21 Jodie Foster's wild child (4)
23 Did this provide Billy Wilder with a hat-trick? (6)
24 Number required for a Joel Schumacher movie (6)

DOWN

1 Coloured like David Lynch's velvet (4)
2 *Jay And Silent Bob – Back* (6)
3 Don, Oscar-nominated for *Hotel Rwanda* (7)
4 Wesley Snipes's vampire-hunting role (5)
5 Sardinian Pier, romantically connected to James Dean (6)
6 He directed the first *Fast And The Furious* (3,5)
12 They were breaking for Emily Watson in 1996 (3,5)
13 Brad Pitt's kind of onscreen club (5)
14 Steve McQueen's 1968 car chase classic (7)
16 Liam, whose role as Zeus in *Wrath Of The Titans* was Razzie-nominated (6)
18 Holly, Oscar perfect in *The Piano* (6)
19 Mr. Hunt, aka Tom Cruise, famed for his immensely taxing projects (5)
22/10 ACROSS Qualities needed for a Brian Wilson biopic (4,3,5)

OCTOBER ANSWERS ACROSS 7 Troisi, **8** Heaven, **9** Andy, **10** Herrmann, **11** Beaches, **13** Ashes, **15** Oscar, **17** Much Ado, **20** Mr. Ripley, **21** Elms, **22** Victim, **23** Ice Age. **DOWN 1** Orange, **2** City, **3** Michael, **4** Shire, **5** Jarmusch, **6** Bernie, **12** Chariots, **14** Lucy Liu, **16** Serkis, **18** Damage, **19** Flame, **21** Eden. **ANAGRAM** Jared Leto

GIVEAWAYS



WIN! *Christmas Evil* on Blu-ray signed by Lewis Jackson



JINGLE HELL! THE CHRISTMAS SLASHER CULT CLASSIC HAS been given a high-def makeover courtesy of Glass Doll Films and we have five copies to give away. To see how bad this Santa gets, just answer the question below and you could be getting a signed *Christmas Evil* Blu-ray from Santa's sack. But only if you're not on the naughty list...

TO WIN, TELL US WHO YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE SANTA IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *Spooks: The Greater Good* on DVD



KIT HARINGTON TAKES A BREAK FROM *GAME OF THRONES* to do a bit of action-packed sleuthing in the big screen version of the British espionage show *Spooks*. And he still hasn't had a haircut. To see how swoony he looks in modern togs, win one of the 10 DVDs we have up for grabs.

TO WIN, TELL US WHO YOUR FAVOURITE TV SPY IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *StalkHer* on Blu-ray or DVD



NOW THE TABLES ARE TURNED ON MICK Taylor... sorry, John Jarratt. He may have chilled Australia to the bone in *Wolf Creek* but now Jarratt finds himself playing the victim at the hands of Kaarin Fairfax's angry workmate. We have five on each format to give away.

TO WIN, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE AUSSIE HORROR IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *Dark Was The Night* on DVD



WHO DOESN'T LOVE A MONSTER MOVIE? Especially one that promises a "never-before-seen monster". Three people who have seen it are Kevin Durand, Lukas Haas and Bianca Kajlich who star in this creature feature. If you want to have a gander yourself, win one of 10 DVDs.

TO WIN, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE MONSTER IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *Iris* on DVD plus *Women In This Town* fashion book



FROCKS AHOY! *IRIS* IS THE AWESOME doco about Iris Apfel, the quick-witted, flamboyant 93-year-old style maven who is a renowned face on the NYC fashion scene. Five lucky punters will take home a DVD and book.

TO WIN, TELL US WHO THE BEST DRESSED ACTOR IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *The Night Crew* on Blu-ray or DVD



IT'S LUKE GOSS VS DANNY TREJO IN A guns-blazing actioner pitching a Mexican drug cartel against a group of bounty hunters, both sides fighting for a mysterious Chinese woman played by the awesomely named Chasty Ballesteros. We have five copies on each format to win.

TO WIN, TELL US WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE BROS SONG IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *Sammy J & Randy In Ricketts Lane* on DVD



A SITCOM WITH SONGS AND PUPPETRY FOR adults, *Ricketts Lane* stars Aussie comedian Sammy J and his puppet friend Randy as a down on his luck lawyer and a gambling, drinking divorcee who are forced to live together. To see how odd this odd couple get, win one of 10 DVDs.

TO WIN, TELL US WHO YOUR FAVOURITE TV PUPPET IS, AND WHY.

WIN! *Southpaw* on Blu-ray



JAKE GYLLENHAAL BULGES HIS BICEPS AND buffs up to the max as Billy Hope, a boxer looking for a break after his wife dies in a terrible accident and he loses his daughter to child protection services. Will this no-hoper out-Rocky Rocky? Win one of 10 Blu-rays to find out.

TO WIN, TELL US WHO YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE BOXER IS, AND WHY.

HOW TO ENTER

To win any of these prizes, email us at empiregiveaways@bauer-media.com.au, write the prize in the subject line, your preferred format if there are both DVD or Blu-ray options and complete the answer in 25 words or less, not forgetting to include your contact details. All competitions are open to both Australian and New Zealander *Empire* readers. Entries close January 13 2016.
For conditions of entry visit www.bauer-media.com.au/terms/competition-terms

CAPTION COMPETITION



How To Be Single

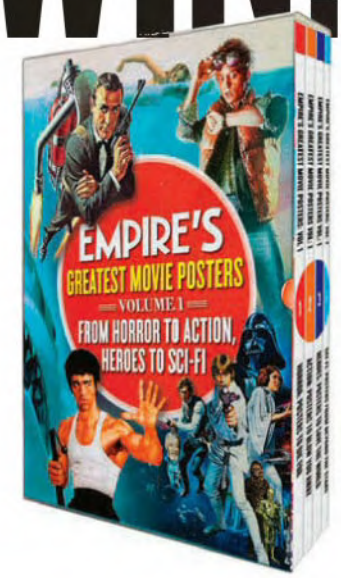
CAST **DAKOTA JOHNSON, REBEL WILSON, ALISON BRIE** / DIRECTOR **CHRISTIAN DITTER**

WIN!

CAPTION THE PICTURE ABOVE AND WIN BIG

THE GIRLS ARE BACK IN TOWN! DAKOTA Johnson, Alison Brie and Leslie Mann all stand back in awe as Aussie funnygirl Rebel Wilson is let loose in *How To Be Single*, the latest crass comedy hailed as the next *Bridesmaids*. The caption singled out as the most fabulous will take home the behemoth that is *Empire's Greatest Movie Posters Volume 1* four-book set ($59.99 in all good book stores now). Send us your entry and while you're waiting to see if you've won, build a new shelf to support its immense awesomeness, just in case. It's huge!

***HOW TO BE SINGLE* IS OUT FEBRUARY 11, 2016.**





HOW TO ENTER
Use the free *viewa* app to scan this page. Then fill in the on-screen form with your 10 words or less caption and hit SUBMIT. The winner will be published in the March 2016 edition of *Empire*.

NOVEMBER 2015 WINNER



"A Green Hornet, a Robin and a Falcon walk into a bar..."

Congratulations Carmen Foott! You win the awesome *Empire's Greatest Movie Posters Volume 1* four-book set!



EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope

"THIS IS THE WEAPON OF A JEDI KNIGHT."

SETTING THE SCENE **If *Star Wars* is the story of the Skywalker family, then this is perhaps the key scene in the saga. Luke Skywalker learns of his heritage and, like a galactic spin-off of *Antiques Roadshow*, is given the most important of family heirlooms – his father's lightsaber. Expect this moment to be riffed on in *The Force Awakens*. George Lucas also delivers a poetic description of the Force, before those pesky midi-chlorians came and mucked it all up.**

INT. KENOBI'S DWELLING
Luke (Mark Hamill) repairs C-3PO (Anthony Daniels), as Obi-Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) sits beside him.

Luke: No, my father didn't fight in the wars. He was a navigator on a spice freighter.

Obi-Wan: That's what your uncle told you. He didn't hold with your father's ideals. Thought he should have stayed here and not gotten involved.

Luke: You fought in the Clone Wars?

Obi-Wan: Yes, I was once a Jedi Knight, the same as your father.

Luke: I wish I'd known him.

Obi-Wan: He was the best star-pilot in the galaxy, and a cunning warrior. I understand you've become quite a good pilot yourself. And he was a good friend. Which reminds me…

He gets up and walks across to a chest.

Obi-Wan: I have something here for you. Your father wanted you to have this when you were old enough, but your uncle wouldn't allow it. He feared you might follow old Obi-Wan on some damned-fool idealistic crusade like your father did.

He removes a metal object from the chest.

C-3PO: Sir, if you'll not be needing me, I'll close down for a while.

Luke: Sure, go ahead.

The droid goes still. Luke looks at what Obi-Wan is holding with interest.

Luke: What is it?

Obi-Wan: It's your father's lightsaber. This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as clumsy or random as a blaster.

Luke takes it and activates a button on the handle. A beam of bright energy shoots out about four feet.

Obi-Wan: An elegant weapon for a more civilised age. For over a thousand generations the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic. Before the dark times, before the Empire.

Luke: How did my father die?

Obi-Wan: A young Jedi named Darth Vader, who was a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father. Now the Jedi are all but extinct. Vader was seduced by the dark side of the Force.

Luke: The Force?

Obi-Wan: Now, the Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.

LIKE THIS, WATCH THIS



PREDATOR 2
(1990)
Danny Glover is gifted an ancient pistol by an impressed Predator. Its elaborate backstory is documented in comic book *Predator: 1718*.


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JAMES PUREFOY
AND
MORGAN FREEMAN
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